CHANCE AND CHANGE IN CHINA

A RIVER GUN BOAT.

CHANCE & CHANGE IN CHINA

BY

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CHANCE AND CHANGE IN CHINA

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

Old and New

As we stepped on shore at Hongkong, behold the streets were gay with many coloured flags in honour of the birth of the "People's Kingdom." A high official in the Imperial service, hurrying with all speed to Peking, laughed sceptically at the mere suggestion. "Who is this Sun Yat Sen?" he said, "many in the north have not even heard his name." Our Imperial friend, however, preferred not to go on shore at Hongkong. He stayed in seclusion on board the steamer and took the precaution to have his queue removed before our arrival in Shanghai.

Hongkong was certainly a little premature in its rejoicings, but during those first momentous days of the Chinese Republic some confusion arose in regard to dates. I remember no fewer than three "New Year's days," one according to the Western calendar, one by order of the Nanking Government on January 15th, and one on the old Chinese date at the beginning of February.

In Shanghai the new era showed itself in many ways. Rents of houses, of every kind of lodging, rose by leaps and bounds, for all the world had brought his wife and his wealth to dwell in the safety of foreign Concessions until the storm had blown past.

On open roadways, outside Concession boundaries, and on bits of land hastily converted into parade grounds, raw recruits in uniform and out of uniform were learning the German goose step. In the wild enthusiasm of the moment a corps of "Amazons" had offered their services. The President, it was said, highly disapproved of these women soldiers. How those amongst them, who happened to possess bound feet, contrived anything in the nature of a march, history does not relate. As a matter of fact, except on various occasions when they helped to guard the railway, it was doubtful if they were ever engaged in active service, and after a short time some returned to their homes, and others sought fresh fields of activity. One member of the "Amazon" corps —a distinctly capable young married woman—speedily exchanged the sword for a text-book on Kindergartens, and wisely decided that, as an inaugurator of a Froebel Institute in her native city, she would be of more use to her country than fighting as a soldier—a soldier moreover, who, under present conditions in China, could not even march to battle without a chaperon.

In those days one came across many quaint sartorial effects in the streets of Shanghai. "Do but look at the cut of the clothes," said Carlyle, "that light visible result significant of a thousand things which are not visible." The clothes of fashionable Chinese women became tighter, pinched at the waist, and narrower at the sleeves, in foolish imitation of supposed foreign style, and in happy oblivion of the old tradition that tight clothing indicated poverty. The men, provided they were good republicans, docked their queues, and donned some kind of a foreign hat or cap. In the matter of headgear—

cheap and trashy—Japan almost over-reached herself. By the summer cheap hats were at a discount. The last lot had succumbed to the first shower of rain, and the next consignment was re-shipped to Japan as "not wanted." Some enterprising Chinese tradesmen in the interior decided to make their own hats, and one of an ingenious turn of mind cut his brims and crowns out of discarded oil tins, and covered them with native flannel. One style of foreign hat was considered every bit as good as another, and at Wuchang a Chinese officer engaged in drilling his men had proudly added as a finishing touch to his uniform, a tall silk "chimney-pot." A certain little Chinese lady hit on the novel expedient of cutting a large round hole in the crown of her new possession so that her glossy black hair dressed on the top of her head, might still show to advantage.

But while new China was buying foreign hats and suits of Western clothing and organising military processions of a triumphal nature; whilst youthful reformers were hurriedly commencing to take to pieces the old wall round the native city, and considering whether or not to melt down the statue of Li Hung Chang into copper cash—dark days of terror and bloodshed were overshadowing many a town and village in inland provinces. There were armies galore—some Republican, some Imperial, others consisting merely of robbers and brigands.

Meanwhile the Imperial Government maintained apparently a calm front, conferring degrees and publishing edicts to the effect that so-and-so might wear the sable fur jacket with lining, and that some other privileged person might ride on horseback in the outer court.

The final descent from the "Dragon Throne" was worthy of all the traditions of the "Middle Kingdom." In no other country would it or could it have been accomplished so gracefully. One might almost have fancied that the idea of a Republic had partly emanated from the royal mind. There was something uncanny in the sweet good nature expressed in one of the last of those Imperial Edicts :—

"Great distance separates the South from the North. Each upholds its own against the other, and the result is the stoppage of merchants in the road and the exposure of scholars in the field, all because, should the form of government be undecided so most of the people's lives will be thrown out of gear. Now the majority of the people of the whole nation are leaning towards republicanism. . . . How could we then persist in opposing the desire and hatred of millions for the nobility and glory of one name. . . . Let Yuan Shi Kai organise with full powers a provisional government . . . and I and the Emperor may retire into a leisured life and spend our years pleasantly, enjoying courteous treatment from the citizens and (here one detects a touch of irony) seeing with our own eyes the completion of an ideal government. Would this not be a grand feat ? Respect this."

CHAPTER I

The Seductive City

"Nanking," the "golden burial ground," as it used to be called in days of long past splendour; Nanking, the "Seductive City," where a thousand years ago pleasure-loving emperors built fairy palaces for court favourites with fragrant walls impregnated with musk, and pavements of "golden lilies"; Nanking, the southern capital in the days of the founder of the Ming dynasty, but now for long ages a mere ruin of its former self—awoke from her slumbers, and made an effort to look young and spry. Was not the first President of the new Republic actually living within her walls? Sun Yat Sen, the magnanimous, who "self effacing like ice in water," was just now engaged in handing over the reins of government to the hero of the north as quietly and pleasantly as though it were merely a case of passing the salt.

The Yamen had been swept and garnished in his honour. The king of beasts painted out from its gates; the human parasites banished from the inner precincts. In the city itself all buildings of any importance from the temples downwards had been turned into barracks, the idols either torn down to make more space for the soldiers or left as part of the furniture of the mess-room. When the President appeared in public an up-to-date motor car with a trim little chauffeur in foreign garb took the place of the sedan chairs and red umbrellas and the official insignia of other days.

The city oozed with soldiers—80,000 at the lowest computation—soldiers in khaki uniforms of Western cut, some of them thickly wadded with cotton wool, soldiers shambling and dishevelled in grey and blue or even magenta-red slashed with yellow. These last were the trained bomb throwers and displayed the nature of their calling inscribed in full on a white band across the chest.

Within the city walls upon the grave-strewn hills, where lay the bones of many of those who had perished in the Taiping Rebellion half a century ago, these ready-made warriors blew forth discordant blasts from newly-purchased trumpets, morning, noon, and eve. In the narrow roads between the vegetable fields they marched along to the sound of vocal music; in the busy streets they mingled with the crowd, sometimes walking hand in hand like affectionate school girls, sometimes carrying their birds out for an airing or gently bearing their teapots down the road for a fresh supply of hot water. They occupied the tea houses, they lingered in the shops appropriating oddments; they tried on new uniforms in public places, and at open doorways. They commandeered rickshaws, slept peacefully through the morning hours in the horse troughs at the railway station, and did many other harmless and unexpected things.

"We are paid to *fight*," they said, and in times of peace they claimed the privilege of doing whatever they pleased.

Fighting seemed over for the nonce, but within the walls of Nanking a gaping wound remained to tell the tale of the passing of the city from the hands of the Imperialists into those of the so-called Republicans.

The whole of the great Manchu city lay in ruins—a desert of broken walls, grey and cold, of scraps of paved courtyards and apertures that once had been doorways, through which a melancholy vista opened out of suites of ruined apartments. Nothing remained but crumbling heaps of stones, shut in by crumbling walls—the crushed habitations of a proud race that for 260 years and more had lived as a privileged people idling in the market place whilst other folk worked. North, south, east and west silent alley ways, roughly paved, led through this graveyard of a city—past broken columns that had once been pillars of palatial halls, past battered archways that had once spanned the gates of lordly mansions —all gone now save for one touch of irony—the Spirit Walls *—whitewashed and bare, inscribed with a mammoth character, meaning "Fuh" (happiness). These stood petrified, as it were, like sentinels caught slumbering, who had started up to find the gateway gone, which alas, it was their duty to protect.

How had this appalling destruction come to pass? Partly, so said some, through the terrible explosion of the gunpowder manufactory in the Imperial City on the raising of the siege. The Republican Army arriving on the scene soon after, put the finishing touches. It had been stipulated that there should be no massacre of the Manchus, so the soldiers set to work not to massacre but to destroy. In the panic that followed some of the terrified refugees sought refuge in suicide, others fled to the Tuh Tong Yamen, and some—mostly young women and girls, had mysteriously disappeared.

* An isolated wall built in front of houses to prevent the ingress of demons.

The descendants of the Manchu garrisons, which in the early days of Manchu rule were established in all the provincial capitals, were divided into three classes—the Djoh, the I and the Pin. The Djoh, being wealthy, had in the majority of cases made good their escape before the commencement of the siege. With true Oriental lack of sympathy, however, there were instances of poor relations left behind to shift for themselves as best they could, and with them some 3,000 or so of their poorer neighbours.

After the soldiers had had the first pickings, the coolie population followed in their wake, and finally the beggars gathered up the crumbs. In the end it was hardly to be wondered at, that nothing portable remained unappropriated. Fallen beams, doors, gateposts, everything in the nature of woodwork were coveted prizes, for the weather was cold just then, and fuel unusually dear.

No doubt the authorities at Nanking felt that they could not safely ignore the existence of an army of homeless Manchus within the city walls. Something must assuredly be done, the question was how little would suffice. The Tuh Tong Yamen must get rid of them somehow, the sooner the better. Thus it came about that here and there in the ruined city, a few houses only partially destroyed were discovered. These were turned into public refuges and a daily dole of rice apportioned to all who gave in their names to the authorities.

Green and blue, the green of willow trees bursting into leaf, the periwinkle blue of the ubiquitous calico gown—grey stone walls with here and there a splash of gory red—always remind me of the city of Nanking in

the spring time. Not indeed in the heart of the city, for in those narrow streets there is no room left for willow trees, and even the blue calico gown was less in evidence in the early days of the " People's Kingdom " than the semi-Western uniforms of the soldiers. Within the walls of Nanking, however, one may drive mile after mile along streets, in which there are as many fields as shops—along roads lined with trees and with the walls of gardens—along lanes which creep in and out amongst the vegetable fields, or grassy hills bulging with graves—and some of the graves were especially odoriferous, for they were made in a hurry after the fighting between the Imperial troops and those of the new Republic.

Wherever one goes, soldiers of some sort are inevitable —soldiers carrying boughs of peach blossom, soldiers pushing along hand carts, heaped high with furniture, soldiers riding rough unkempt ponies with bridles made of rope, soldiers sauntering, soldiers lounging. No wonder there are " flying words " that this regiment or the other is contemplating mutiny ; that the men from different provinces are at loggerheads, and that all are dissatisfied because their pay is in arrears.

Some finance themselves by appropriating goods from the shops, and the shopkeepers in the wealthiest part of the city, where the silversmiths and silk merchants congregate, had agreed with a certain stalwart company of soldiers to pay them so much a month provided that their shops were left undisturbed. A good many tradesmen, however, adopted a more economical plan, and more than one of the big silk stores kept up, as it were, a smiling exterior, but the wide open doors and the shopmen behind the counter were only a ruse. There was

nothing left on the shelves of any real value. Vegetable sellers from the country were fortunate if, on the way to market, the contents of their baskets were not commandeered by the soldiers. They commandeered most things, from the rickety rickshaws to the little train that was intended to carry passengers from the railway station four miles outside the city gates to the city—and one day, in the exuberance of their spirits, they commandeered the idols.

The southern troops were the leaders in this crusade against idolatry. That was indeed a day of terror for the priests who lurked behind the temple walls, and for the nuns crouching in the nunneries. The people have at the best but a low opinion of priests and nuns.

> "Ten Buddhist nuns and nine are bad,
> The odd one left is doubtless mad,"

goes the adage, and that day over a hundred Taoist and Buddhist shrines and temples in the city of Nanking were shorn of their treasures. So sudden was the onslaught, so unprepared were the priests, and so dumbfounded, that not the slightest opposition was offered. The soldiers strode in and out again, destroying as they went.

"Do your idols eat cake?" they asked. "If they do, well and good, if not, they are useless."

And as the idols, one and all, rejected the tempting morsels, they were promptly hacked to pieces.

In front of our gates stood a humble one-storied house, scrupulously neat and tidy and surrounded by a vegetable plot, in which the lines of cabbage plants and so forth were as symmetrical as the lines of a chessboard. Its mistress, a dapper little woman in a flowing gown of pale grey, was a Buddhist nun, and the house was called a

nunnery, although our friend lived there in solitary state, save for the presence of a serving-woman and two small acolytes.

On the day of terror, a handful of soldiers followed by a crowd of riff-raff, forced open the front doors and disappeared within. In a few short moments they were back again bearing a ponderous "goddess of mercy" of gilded wood, hacked and disfigured. Without more ado they made a bonfire of "her" by the side of the road, but she did not burn readily, and through the next twenty-four hours or so smouldered odoriferously, emitting a smell of singed cloth and burning paint. The little nun took the matter very philosophically. We called in to see her, wishing to buy a trophy, but there was nothing left to buy—only heaps of rubbish, scraps of gilded wood, incense sticks, candle grease and broken oddments.

We supposed that her source of income had vanished in the flames with her idol, that there would be no more offerings of food or money—no dainty dishes for her own consumption after the goddess had finished with them, but inquiry elicited the fact that she had private means of her own, to say nothing of a brother who, she said, might now come and live with her, in which case she would get on quite comfortably without the "goddess of mercy."

The soldiers' fray with the idols led to more serious events, and one night we were aroused from our slumbers to find ourselves on the outside edge of a battle. A certain section of the troops had broken out into open rebellion as a protest against their long overdue pay. Half through the night and on and off through the follow-

ing day the firing continued. The rice shops, the money shops—every shop of any importance in a particular quarter of the city had been looted; the streets were littered with dead and dying. The men had lost all control of themselves and fought like devils—no wonder, for as the day broke they knew that the odds were against them. They were far outnumbered by the troops that had remained loyal, and to the captured no mercy was shown. During that week 200 executions took place, and baskets laden with bleeding human heads were carried as a warning to others through the principal streets of the city.

The hot weather comes on rapidly at Nanking, and on sultry days the air was heavy with the peculiarly obnoxious smells without which no Chinese city is complete. The primitive methods by which material for enriching the soil is collected in public at street corners in almost every street of the city, was painfully in evidence in the erstwhile southern capital. The old order was changing in many ways, but not in the matter of dirt. On the contrary, the dirt showed up more repellently than ever side by side with Western innovations.

There were many quaint contrasts of the new and the old in these days of transition. One would come across a son of "New China" in immaculate European garb, making a purchase in a shop that was fitted with plate glass windows in foreign style and dressed with haberdashery and swords, with babies' bonnets and military caps, with looking-glasses and slate pencils.

The words "Military dress of hat and clothing" were written in large type in the English language over the door, but the salesmen behind the counter had no desire

for uncomfortable European clothes, or indeed for any clothes at all. Overcome by the sultriness of the weather they had adopted their summer costume of nothing above the waist and very little below, and in spite of their lack of attire were glistening and streaming with moisture. On one occasion we passed a member of the disbanded Amazon Corps—a girl in masculine garb with hair cut short like a boy, whilst a daughter of the old school, sitting on the side of a well, looked after her wonderingly, and then turned and deliberately expectorated into the well water. Why not? That there was anything unclean in the act would never have occurred to her! Foreign hats were in great request, and in the street some children, innocent of all other clothing, were wearing as sole articles of attire, hats of plaited straw and frilled silk, and were carrying fans!

The new era showed itself in many ways within the Yamen gates. One noticed an unusual air of austerity and a marked absence of the "skirts and ornaments" * of other days. Moreover, foreign buildings contained the Government offices, and a suburban villa and a bungalow, occupied, the one by the chief himself and the other by the second in command, were built in foreign style. We found ourselves one afternoon as guests at the bungalow, drinking, what was supposed to be foreign tea, in cups half filled with condensed milk and lumps of sugar.

The house was furnished in Western mode, and Chinese taste, still untrained in these matters, had decided that a suite of hall furniture would be appropriate for the reception room; therefore a hat-stand with mirror and coat pegs—all complete—occupied the place of honour.

* Women-kind.

The Yamen at Nanking boasts a garden of real Chinese type, of artificial lakelets spanned by stone bridges amongst miniature mountains tucked in between pigmy forests. One grotesque "foreign" touch, however, had lately been added in the shape of a glaringly white "house-boat," furnished in foreign style, fitted with electric light and, alas! *built upon a rock*—significant this of many other superficial imitations of Western customs in these strange times.

In most provincial capitals the old examination cells have disappeared, but in Nanking nearly 20,000 of them remain. Looking down from the watch towers, built every here and there in their midst, one seemed at first sight to be perched above a brown-hued sea of "poultry houses"—built in long rows, with narrow passages between the rows, radiating from central alley-ways.

Each building measured six feet long, and there, in by-gone times, as in a living grave, day in and day out, ill or well, the candidates remained during the space of time allotted for the examinations. Their food was passed in through a hole, and when at last the ordeal was over and the doors opened, it was sometimes found that more than one had given up the contest and passed *nolens volens* before the final tribunal.

The Republican authorities were making good use of the great examination halls situated at the far end of the forest of cells.

They were crowded from wall to wall with a squealing, screeching army of children—poor, miserable, angry, unattractive morsels of humanity. A sharp-featured woman here and there administered harmless though undiscriminating blows with a bamboo rod.

Where had all these children come from ? What were they doing here ?

The answer was unexpected. They were the purchases of the soldiers from the south—bought at the rate of 2*s*. a child, or even less, to take back to their homes with them to turn into " tu-di " (apprentices) or for some other useful purpose, but the Nanking authorities had decreed otherwise. All children whose parents could no longer be discovered, and one presumed this to be the general rule, were to be trained for some useful trade in an orphanage run by public funds. The " bear-garden " was evidently the orphanage in embryo, but alas, by all appearances, it was desperately in need of an organiser.

CHAPTER II

The City of the River Orchid

Bamboos—nothing but bamboos, climbing the steep hillside above us, clinging to the precipitous slope below —low mountains all around clothed with bamboos from base to summit, tiny valleys in the depth beneath almost choked with the same green feathery trees.

"A bamboo a bamboo was to me and nothing more," but to a son of Han a bamboo may mean any one of a score or more of useful articles—from a delicious food to a summer waistcoat—from a piece of furniture, or a rope of great strength to a delicately constructed flea catcher!

The house in which we were staying clung, as it were, to a ledge of rock, a little below the summit of one of those bamboo-covered hills, and the drooping boughs were like giant ferns swaying before our windows. The forest was not without flowers. Here and there, great lilies of a luscious creamy white shone like stars in green hollows. Year by year, however, the lilies grow more scarce, for the Chinese cook the bulbs in syrup, and eat them for dinner.

China with her undisciplined soldiers, her political parties, her aspirations and her tragedies, had been left behind in the plains. The peasant folk living amongst those bamboo forests pursued the even tenor of their way untouched, and wholly undisturbed by the doings of the outside world.

One hot scorching afternoon we slid rather than walked down a steep, slippery track under the trees to a little village lying in the shadows at the foot of the mountain—a village innocent of shops, innocent even of temples; there had been one once they said, but now it was occupied as a family dwelling. The houses, clustered together on the banks of a rushing mountain stream, were wreathed around by vegetation of an almost tropical growth, broad-leaved Indian corn, spreading palms, banana bushes, peach trees and pumelos, and beyond the gardens, fields of waving grain, and beyond the fields, bamboo forests thicker than ever and a blue vista of mountains.

The inhabitants had practically no need of shops. There are apparently many of these "self-contained" villages still left in China—where the people grow their own cotton, weave their own cloth, keep their own silk-worms and make their own silk, grow their own rape seed for oil, their own rice, millet, corn, tea and tobacco, build their houses with mud bricks dried in the sun, make mats of palm leaves, and rain coats of palm fibre. Usually the only two articles bought outside are paper and salt. Even the children's toys, where indeed they possess any, are of home manufacture. The Chinese boy has an ingenious way of making his own butterfly net. He slits a piece of bamboo for a few inches down the middle, and inserts between the fork a slender bamboo stick. This he plunges into bushes thick with cobwebs in the early morning, and winds it round and round till there is an elaborate network of glutinous cobweb threads, and woe betide the insect or the butterfly that comes into too close a contact with this sticky gossamer.

The men who gathered round to look with interest at the outside kingdom folk, still wore their queues and saw no reason to change the fashion of their forefathers, for things political had no interest for them. That China was now a "Min Kueh" (People's Kingdom) and not an Empire, they had heard, but the matter was of no consequence. Besides, it was, as far as they knew, one and the same thing. No soldiers had come to trouble their peace—there were no robber armies to upset the neighbourhood. Honest, straightforward people they seemed, simple and unsophisticated. "Those who live amongst the mountains," say the Chinese, "are virtuous." "Those who live by the water are wise."

In the same province of Chekiang, not a year ago, a robber chief, known by the name of "Spirits of Wine," with his army of bandits had raided city after city, possessing himself of large sums of money, killing and destroying. In orthodox Chinese style the authorities had offered him official posts in order to keep him quiet, but "Spirits of Wine," though originally only a stonemason by trade, is said to have declined any office less important than that of a Viceroy, and as this was not forthcoming, he preferred to remain a bandit. Of late, however, fortune had turned against him—many of his followers had been killed, others had deserted, and "Spirits of Wine" for the time being had retired into private life.

I was destined to become more intimately acquainted with the province of Chekiang before the end of the year, but not, I am glad to say, with the robber chief.

NEAR THE "CITY OF THE RIVER ORCHID."

The City of the River Orchid lies on the banks of the Tsien-tang river some 200 miles from the coast.

Not far from the West Gate outside the city walls there stands a house slightly higher than its neighbours —flanked by two tall banana bushes—so small is one of the upper windows, and so large the banana leaves that one single leaf hangs like a green blind hiding the panes of glass. The house is built on the river bank round three sides of a little courtyard walled in by a high white wall ; from the upper windows one looks across to the opposite shore—backed by a ridge of blue hills. Sometimes on sunny days the opposite shore is streaked and lined with a vivid peacock blue. I used to wonder why the fields should suddenly assume this brilliant tone of colour, but soon discovered the cause to be cotton cloth—an acre of it or more, freshly dyed and spread out in long lengths to dry. The sun sets over that opposite shore flooding the water with golden light, and turning the fields and the trees and the mountains an inky black against a sky of crimson fire.

It was early in November when I first arrived. Along the banks of the river the tallow trees were in all the glory of their blood-red autumn foliage—in a day or two the farmers would begin to gather the snow-white berries to sell to the candle makers. The cottager who happens to possess a single one of these tallow trees in his bit of ground possesses an addition to his yearly income which is not to be despised. The monster camphor trees are still more valuable. They stand out here and there on the river bank like forest giants with their glossy evergreen foliage.

In front of the city the river is the third of a mile wide, a busy scene at all hours of the day. The whitewashed

houses peeping over the whitened city wall look down the muddy bank to the heavy fringe of brown-hooded boats along the water's edge—the permanent homes of many a large family. The boats come and go, but some are never away for long, and there are always others to take their place. Here and there, stretching far out beyond the shore, are the timber merchants' stock-in-trade—rafts of logs tied together to be kept till wanted. Further down, in a less reputable quarter, are the " flower boats " spick and span—bright with pot plants and gaily curtained windows clean and freshly painted, the dark blots on so many a riverside city—and in passing, one catches a glimpse of young girls in dainty silks and jewellery, peeping forth at the world of which they know so little, save in its saddest and bitterest forms.

Out where the current flows more swiftly, the fishing-boats are coming in with their cormorants—so tame are the birds, and so obedient that they answer to a call, and so sharp-sighted that often a gesture from their master is all sufficient. It is said that though hundreds of these wise black birds may be fishing together at one spot, no well-trained cormorant will mistake another boat for its own.

Beyond the city the glistening waters of the river drop out of sight at the foot of the mountains draped in their beautiful autumnal robe, which made one think of the violet and amethyst lights and shadows on the Yorkshire moorland hills.

A warm welcome awaited me in the white house behind the banana bushes. The clean sweet atmosphere of a well-ordered English household in the midst of the horrible filth of a Chinese city was unspeakably refreshing, after

the close quarters on my brown-hooded boat, where for days the cold wind and the unsavoury crew had occupied all but my own private domain (the corner on the bed quilts behind a screen of curtains). Every detail was a pleasure from the open windows and the banana leaves to the white cloth on the tea table and the fresh herbal scent of a bowl of chrysanthemums.

The three "Giao-si" (teacher sisters *) were all at home, as it happened.

They were the only "outside kingdom folk" in the place, not counting myself; but then I was only the "from Shanghai come guest," as the people said, and was staying there to "hsi" (play).

The west gate of the city facing the river looks like the entrance to a tunnel mounted high above the water's edge on the top of two long flights of steps. The steps are black with liquid mud, the walls of the tunnel are black with age and dirt, but the city walls are white-washed and "make a show" (more than that one cannot expect in China) of being clean. The first flight and the second are divided by a narrow terrace, and here not more than a year ago the public executions used to take place. In these days criminals condemned to death are usually shot, and not decapitated, but were it not for the dread of appearing in the next world without a head, one cannot but think that the unlucky victims would prefer the old method to the new—in order to avoid the long drawn-out agony of acting as targets for soldiers who cannot shoot straight. The black tunnel, like a gateway, is a fitting entrance to a city in which the main

* Members of the China Inland Mission.

streets are always coated with slimy mud even on the dry days. Morning, noon and eve the water-carriers come and go, and the water, splashing over from the sides of their open buckets, mingles with the mud and the refuse, which in these days of the "People's Kingdom" it is nobody's business to remove. Morning, noon and eve carriers of other buckets—the contents of which are destined for the fields—pass out of the gates with their odoriferous burdens. They have paid just about three farthings for their purchase. Not long ago there was a talk of raising the price by another few cash, but the bucket carriers went on strike, so the old rate of payment is still in force.

The main streets are narrow, six feet wide at the outside, and the paving stones along the centre sometimes rock ominously under one's weight. Through sundry cracks and crevices one catches sight of the stagnant water underneath of—the city drain! The side streets are usually residential streets, but the houses—hiding behind high walls—are for the most part invisible, save for an occasional inconspicuous doorway. Some of these side streets are hardly more than three feet wide, and lead the way by a series of "knight's moves," till, like Alice in the Looking Glass Garden, one almost expects to find oneself at the end, back again at the beginning.

The side streets are comparatively deserted, but the main streets are so densely crowded that it is usually necessary to walk in single file, and often the way is blocked by some burden bearer, who chants forth a warning note all along the street to clear the road before him. "Take care, take care; I am carrying oil!"—knowing that no one will willingly rub up against an

oil tin and spoil a good gown. Sometimes the burden will be something far less obnoxious, but, by the magic word oil or fish, the crowd has moved aside, and the bearer has gained his point.

Fortunately, there is no wheeled traffic, and only on the rarest occasions does a rough-haired little pony patter through the streets, scattering the pedestrians to the right and left, with its rider of the John Gilpin type, who seems to say, as he clatters by, "I came because my horse would come!"

The open-fronted shops on either side of the narrow pavement encroach as much as they dare on the public highway, and their privileges are many—some are literally disgorging their goods on to the pavement—and others, old clothes' shops for the most part, hang forth an assortment of gaily-coloured garments over the heads of the passers-by, much as an English inn hangs forth a signboard. Now and again a portion of the pavement is occupied by a street stall, and sometimes by a "roulette table," at which clients, mostly children, are gambling for oranges. A medicine stall, larger than the rest, is only to be seen on fine days, as rain would damage the valuable stock-in-trade—the bears' paws, the tiger jaws, the human teeth, the dried centipedes, the withered lizards, the petrified sea-horses.

The owner, an aged man with sunken eyes behind great horn spectacles, not only sells medicine, but performs operations for all the world to see. I passed him one day busy cupping a patient, who sat in a state of semi-nudity on the side of the pavement, placidly undergoing the prescribed treatment, and no one showed the slightest interest. On another occasion I stopped to

make a purchase of a dried centipede, about five inches long; price, the seventh part of a penny! On the bamboo hills, last summer, centipedes were the servants' perquisites, not that any one wished to dispute their claim, far from it. One day an enormous specimen was borne carefully away from the verandah unkilled, and, on inquiring the reason of this apparently gentle treatment, the answer was that, in order to fetch a good price in the medicine shops, the poor beast must be slowly scorched to death! One could not help wondering what price was considered good when the final sum paid by the customer amounted to the *seventh part of a penny!* Had my especial trophy been bought for use, and not for ornament, one would have soaked it in hot water and applied the lotion externally for a gathering or an abscess. The lizards, so the old man said, were excellent remedies for heart disease, the sea-horses most efficacious for wounds, and the bears' paws good for dropsy. A few days later the old doctor had forgotten all about the dropsy, and muttered that bears' paws were sold for rheumatism.

In these days of the "People's Kingdom" police in semi-Western uniforms and German military caps are on duty in the streets. They carry loaded rifles with an air of indifference and lounge in doorways in somnolent attitudes. The weakest part of their attire lies in their footgear; leather shoes are seldom seen in the city, and on a dark winter's afternoon I beheld walking down the muddy street one of these armed policemen, whose shoes, alas, were represented by a dainty pair of pale blue bedroom slippers. Most reputable shops possess a shrine to the god of wealth, and cautious proprietors see to it that the shrine shall not be neglected by offering a feast of

pork on the 6th and the 15th of the moon to all employees who have performed daily worship without fail.

As the twilight hour approaches there rises a volume of smoke from every house, rich or poor. The cooking of the evening meal (shao ye fan) has commenced. Up and down the darkening street one figure after another comes to the entrance of the house or shop, as the case may be, with a handful of lighted incense sticks. In the shops this duty is relegated to the youngest apprentice. He bows to heaven, and bows to earth three times over, places the incense sticks before the threshold and departs.

The elegant phrasing and handsome lettering of the mottos and scrolls is a great feature in all shops of any pretensions in this literary land. There is an inner meaning to some only understood by the initiated. "May you have great joy and good business" is not a polite wish to the passer-by, but a sign by which men may know that the shopkeeper in question is a regular subscriber to the beggars' guild.

"Neither young nor old cheated here," deceives nobody, but the inscription "Truly not two prices" is an outcome of contact with Western standards, and is gradually being taken seriously.

Though this is nominally a city of the second rank, it is of considerably more importance than the cities of the first rank in the neighbourhood. The Tsien-tang river, which divides at this point, brings with it much trade, and though the principal industries of the place, the curing of hams and the manufacture of tinfoil money for the dead in the next world, do not sound especially lucrative, the citizens are distinctly prosperous, the good wages

and plentiful food have tempted many from other provinces to settle in the neighbourhood.

Three days at the outside, down the river, brings one to Hangchow, the provincial capital, and the Chekiang railway, which "some day" is to run through the whole province. Thence a short train journey lands one in Shanghai, the hotbed of things foreign, and "nearly the same as the outside kingdom man's own country." No wonder then that the "City of the River Orchid" shows traces of Western influence.

In the main streets one can count by the half-dozen, shops of cheap foreign oddments varying from skeins of Berlin wool, and pink and blue enamelled washing basins to looking-glasses and little girls' hair combs. The latter are much in favour just now with the boatmen and others for keeping in order the long straight tresses of coarse black hair, which have taken the place of the shaven heads and the queue.

Foreign lamps are also much in request, and the Standard Oil Company is doing a thriving trade. Shops selling patent medicines are the most inviting of all, but are seldom overburdened with customers. Our own experience amongst these tidy well-filled shelves threw some sidelights on the situation.

The enterprising young shopman was not slow to embrace such an excellent opportunity of acquiring a little first-hand knowledge of the drugs that he wished to sell. One bottle after another was brought to the counter with a request that we would graciously condescend to translate the labels, and give some directions as to the value of the medicine and the approximate quantity to be taken at one time.

Foreign hats for men and boys and babies, foreign umbrellas, under garments—sold for outside wear—are to be purchased in some of the up-to-date emporiums. Queer travesties of Western fashions crop up at times in these days of change, and in a city further south, one young dandy is occasionally to be met in the streets wearing a pair of French corsets by way of an outer wrap!

The busy thoroughfares in the "City of the River Orchid" literally hum with industry—this arises from the fact that in most cases the shop and the workshop are one. The bamboo workers, the carpenters, the ironmongers, the coffin makers, the cotton wool carders are all hard at work making their stock-in-trade before the eyes of the passers-by. As to the food shops, that there should be "no deception, ladies and gentlemen," the cooking stoves have been pushed so far forward that they are more than half way out on the narrow pavement. Here, if he so wishes, the future purchaser may watch the concoction of the savoury dish he intends to buy, from start to finish.

There are other trades of a more peaceful nature.

The letter-writer sits at his table tracing beautifully-formed characters with his rabbit-hair brush on transparent paper for a customer who stands patiently waiting, and who apparently has no concern with the contents of the letter, which will be written in accordance with the approved pattern of these things. Inside the darkened precincts of a shrine, a fortune-teller has appropriated a lucky site for his table of books and papers. The change to the Gregorian calendar inaugurated by the Republican Government must, we think, have somewhat disturbed

his calculations. In the old days, for instance, an uneven date was considered propitious, an even date equally unpropitious. Should a death unfortunately take place on the latter, the body must not be placed in the coffin till the following day and so forth. On inquiry, however, one fortune-teller assures us that the change has made no difference at all. "You pay your money and take your choice—either the new or the old." In the scroll shops, artists sit at their work within arm's reach of the passers-by—their paints enclosed in neat little cardboard boxes, their brushes bristling like the quills of a porcupine, from a bamboo stand.

The artists themselves are mostly engaged in painting portraits of the dead—painting even as the letter-writer compiled his letters according to time-honoured rules. Hence there is no attempt at a likeness—and, in all probability both in dress and in features, the departed relative of the family of Tang in the next lane is practically the same as that of the family of Ba who died two hundred years ago.

As we walk through the streets, we have an opportunity of "seeing ourselves as others see us."

"Look there at those two foreigners!" ejaculated an old man. "They are as ugly as death."

"Their eyes are like snails!" said another, "and they are wearing snakes on their hats" (the snakes were twisted scarves).

"That hat," rejoined a neighbour, "is enough to make any one ill with fright."

These, alas, were not empty words. It appears that the child of the man who lives near the East Gate caught sight of that innocent hat a day or two ago. She cried

with alarm, and would not be comforted and has been down with fever ever since.

"Where do these foreigners put their rice," asked one, surveying the waist line of our English tailor-mades. "They are certainly not made the same way as we are."

"They don't eat rice! They eat beef."

"Beef! How can they get beef in this city!"

"Very true!" agreed the other, "But one thing is certain, they do not eat rice, and their food costs them more to buy than ours does!"

In the "City of the River Orchid" it is a punishable offence to kill a cow. Not only would the flesh of the beast be confiscated by the police, but the offender would probably be imprisoned and most certainly fined. On one occasion by the gates of the police station we came across a goodly supply of this forbidden meat, and might for a moderate sum have purchased any quantity we pleased from the police in charge, but a certain air of antiquity about the already cut-up joints deterred us from accepting the constable's smiling offer. There were, however, ways by which beef could be bought independently of all police stations.

At a large city a day's journey off by boat there lives a colony of Mohammedans, who, by paying a slight extra tax, earn the privilege of killing their own cattle—and occasionally at a village not far away Mohammedan beef appears in the market.

During a long spell of dry weather the consumption of meat of any kind is often prohibited under penalty of a heavy fine. In the neighbouring city on the occasion of a long drought the city god was borne forth in state round the streets, and the usual proclamation issued forbidding the

eating of flesh till the coming of the rain. Two men, who had worked themselves into a mad frenzy, headed the procession, holding between them a great wooden fork with which they rushed along blindly as though impelled by some hidden force. The fork, they said, would divulge to them the dwelling place of any who had had the temerity to disobey the order, but the fork, as the foreign teacher pointed out at the end of the day, was unreliable, for had it not led them to the house of his neighbour, a strict vegetarian, and passed by his own door where a goodly joint reposed upon the dinner table.

On the lines probably of the old saying that "providing is preventing," every one carrying an umbrella on these occasions will be punished.

One often hears even in inland China that "everything" has doubled and trebled in price during the last twenty years, but even so, the cost of living in this "City of the River Orchid" is absurdly low.

The "outside kingdom folk" with their expensive tastes for beef, soap, and furniture, and other luxuries, are looked upon as wildly extravagant or extremely wealthy.

Had one the digestion not of an ostrich but of a Chinese—did one possess his unusual ideas of comfort, his peculiarly insensitive olfactory organs and his imperviousness to disease, caused, so it is said, through constant though unintentional inoculation of disease germs—one could live very comfortably on the income of Goldsmith's parson.

Six or seven pounds a year would cover the rent of a family residence, three or four shillings a month would pay the wages of a good cook, provided of course that

he were not required to "eat his own rice." For fourpence or fivepence a day and his food one could even secure the services of a house tailor. Rice, the staple food, is about 1*d.* a pound, eggs run to six or seven a penny, an oil-skin umbrella costs a few pence only, and a pound of charcoal to burn in one's foot stove can be bought for one halfpenny or very little more.

For the rest (in an orthodox Chinese household) a little slave girl, or more than one, is purchased for a mere pittance to help with the house work, and in poorer homes there will probably be a "Sun Bride"—a mere child still, for whom a small sum of money has also been paid, and who is destined to become the wife of the son of the house.

These Chinese children grow up in an adult world.

If our Western children have too many toys, the Chinese children have too few. In these days we do too much possibly for our own small folk—making them less and less inclined to help themselves—but in China the fault is on the other side. The child must adapt himself as best he can to the "grown up" people around him. No "clouds of glory" hover over his early days. No one takes any pains to hide from him the ugly side of life. He soon gets to understand the hidden meaning of much that goes on in the home and in the street, and to know that things are never exactly what they seem to be.

The neighbour's cat, for instance, is not just a simple cat, but a valuable possession costing possibly 700 cash —and instead of tying it to a turtleshell as people usually do to prevent it from escaping—they have rendered it more or less stationary by the weight of a heavy dust pan attached by a cord to its neck.

The snake and the cat grieved not at the death of

Buddha, and therefore they are the only animals, say the Japanese, that may not enter Paradise.

When Chinese cats die they are never buried, but encoffined in an open basket, are hung out in some exposed place, preferably from the top of the city wall as food for the birds, not from any idea of giving the birds a chance to pay back old scores, but merely to avoid calling down the wrath of the earth gods, who would deeply resent the burial of a cat underground. Cats are uncanny creatures and when a death takes place in the household a prudent Chinese family will send the house cat to a neighbour's for the time being, or see that it is kept out of mischief, for cats have been known, so say the superstitious, to jump on a corpse causing it to come to life again—whether temporarily or permanently history does not relate.

In the silkworm season, when rats are more than usually dreaded, cats go up in value, and keepers of silkworms, who have no cat of their own, will probably appropriate some one else's. Its owner is soon on its track, but, instead of demanding its return, he will adopt the more oriental way of standing within ear-shot of the thief and all his neighbours, cursing lustily, which methods, curiously enough, are usually crowned with success.

In this land, where nothing goes by its right name, there are many ways by which allusions are made, to which, luckily, we "foreigners" are often sublimely unconscious. It would require one well versed in Chinese ways to understand by the words "it is raining" pronounced aloud on a perfectly fine day, that "foreign

devils" (foreigners) are passing by, the idea being that when it rains devils are apt to come out into the open; hence the initiated realise at once the meaning conveyed, and no offence is given.

Should an antagonist wish to utter imprecations in our hearing, he may possibly resort to the more polite method of sharpening a knife with great zeal as we pass, signifying the pleasure it would give him to see one decapitated or otherwise uncomfortably disposed of.

This is a land of signs and symbols, and a clenched fist saves the trouble of saying the word that is always best left unsaid—the word *death*, the connection in this case being that as one comes into the world with a closed and empty hand even so does one finally leave it again.

Seeing is believing, so hopes the man who has the "wooden cats" for sale—in other words, the rat traps—and in the sample specimen dangling from a hook a poor terrified rat is crouching, miserably wincing at being thus turned into a public example. But this treatment is kindness itself to that which is accorded occasionally to the "house deer"—as rats are sometimes called—and to nail a poor live captive with one paw to the wall as a warning to its companions, is a custom that commends itself to many an unimaginative son of Han.

A padoga on the summit of a low hill at the back of the city controls its good luck. One gets another impression of these crowded streets when seen from this point of view, and one could almost imagine that a monster chessboard, with squares of black and white, some chipped, some pushed out of gear, lay spread out by the river side.

Not far from the gates of the city temple, at the end of one of the narrow walled streets in a fashionable residential quarter, there lives one of the wealthiest families in the city—the family of Wang. The son and heir—a sleepy youth with projecting eyes and heavy eyelids, whose finger nails, a quarter of an inch long, were bordered with black—had suddenly developed a wish to acquire a knowledge of "foreign words." True, he had never "read books" (*i.e.*, studied) to much purpose, had done little else but eat and sleep; but in these days of the new Republic, even the "gilded youths" of the "City of the River Orchid" felt inspired to make an effort of some kind to keep up with the times, and to be able to speak this "fashionable" English language was, at least, a big step in the right direction.

Wang's father was dead, and he was the only son, and possessed, moreover, the doubtful blessing of two mothers—his own mother and his stepmother. It was said, however, that the two women, now that the "bone of contention" in the shape of Wang senior had been removed, lived together in peace and harmony. They were not the only women in the house either, the "mean one of the inner apartments," young Wang's wife, made up the trio, but she was often ailing, and of no great account in the household, except as the mother of the baby.

When the "outside kingdom folk" called at the house they very naturally asked to see the little Wang, but those in authority looked doubtful. He was delicate, the sight of us might be too great a shock. As a concession the small personage was brought to the door of the stuffy windowless chamber in which he was enclosed

and shown to us from afar. On no account must the visitors come near enough to frighten him, as then assuredly he would burst out crying and lose one of his precious souls.

The Chinese themselves are always careful never to call a small child from one room into another, as popular belief maintains that the demons, hearing his name, will rush through the open door with evil intent.

My pupil, Wang, dressed handsomely in fur-lined brocade, appeared on the scene morning by morning with a boy's little satchel under his arm, and two handsome rings of huge pearls and gigantic sapphires on his fingers. With him came a young relative, a bright open-faced youth of eighteen or so, called Lu, who, anxious to follow supposed foreign fashions, had had inscribed in English letters on a broad gold ring the two words "*Mr.* Lu."

Young Wang and his friend paused every now and then in their laborious reading of an English book for a prolonged yawn. In China this is no breach of etiquette. The yawns were harmless in comparison to my other trial, which arose from the fact that both the young men were afflicted with permanent colds in the head, and were unaccustomed to such commonplace alleviations as pocket handkerchiefs.

The 5,000 rules of etiquette have apparently nothing to say on the subject. One could not but wish that these wealthy youths had spent a little less money on pearls and a trifle more on handkerchiefs.

After several weeks of somewhat halting progress Wang and Lu ceased to come for some days. No message of any kind was sent, no excuse made. At last

a neighbour happened casually to remark that young Lu had gone to his ancestral home five miles away to celebrate the birth of his son, and there would be a wine feast and other festivities in honour of the event.

So then my pupil was not a schoolboy, as I had fondly supposed, but a married man of some years standing.

CHAPTER III

The Black Smoke

Day by day for twelve months or more, those who lived in the "River Street" watched Ba Giao Si as she passed by on her way to and from the Yamen. Though they must have grown accustomed to the sight, they still looked after her with wonderment, and remarked on her great ability, and on the strange doings at that place of dark repute at which she paid such frequent visits. It had for them that peculiar interest that we all feel towards something with which sooner or later we ourselves may become more intimately acquainted.

"Ai Ya," said the bamboo worker, "the buckwheat seller was here this morning. He had just been to the Yamen prison to sell cakes, and he tells me that two more were caught yesterday and that one was Sing Fan from the cloth maker's place."

"Sing Fan! he must be worth several 'wan' (tens of thousands). They will want a big fine from him."

"He was eating the 'black smoke' (smoking opium) when they caught him. He has eaten it now for many years."

"Many years! I should think so. His age is not light. He must be eighty or more."

"I have heard," said another, "from my cousin's son, who is a policeman, that a new proclamation has been sent from the capital, stating that at the beginning of

the new year, all eaters of the black smoke, who persistently refuse to amend their evil ways, will be shot dead like common criminals."

"These must be idle words."

"Alas! It is not so," said one who spoke with authority. "I, with my own eyes, have seen the proclamation. Those under forty will be shot, those over forty will be deprived of their possessions and condemned to a long term of imprisonment."

"Surely, then, it is better to go to the Yamen as thy son's father-in-law has done, and stay for fourteen days, eating the foreigner's medicine, which they say is so good that it takes away all craving for the black smoke."

"Buh tso, buh tso!" (you are right, or as the Chinese put it—you are not wrong).

"If one goes oneself, there is no fine. If one is caught by the soldiers, the fine is heavy, and in any case one must stay as a prisoner and eat the foreign medicine."

"I have heard," said the first speaker, "that Ba Giao Si has a strange looking foreign needle which she drives into one's flesh, and that she knows from the colour of the blood which flows from the wound whether one's words are true words." *

The Opium Refuge, as it is called—in reality a kind of Chinese Marshalsea prison—occupies some ramshackle buildings within the gates of the Yamen. The giant figures of the two famous generals of the Tang dynasty, painted in brilliant blues and reds on the outer doors,

* In doubtful cases a drop or two of the patient's blood dissolved in a solution of apomorphine and alcohol will show the presence or absence of opium.

protect the place from evil. The picture of a squirming dragon in green and white and blue over the inner doors assures good luck. The inner court, squeezed in among the low-roofed buildings with greasy walls, and windows of torn paper, is Ba Giao Si's consulting room. The dingy rooms, with a four-post curtained bed in each, are, some of them, occupied by sundry minor officials connected with the opium work, and one has been turned temporarily into a small dispensary, whilst the dingiest and darkest of them all are assigned to " paying patients "—in other words, men of means who have come on their own initiative to break off the drug habit under the care of the foreign doctor and her medical assistant, the worthy Bao Djen.

At one of the tables a bespectacled, moon-faced man of scholarly appearance sat writing. He looked after us a little wistfully.

" He is a man who has taken a very good degree " said Ba Giao Si. " He is in prison for debt, not on account of opium smoking. He owes an immense sum. I forget how many thousands of dollars."

I expressed surprise.

" Not that the debt is anything to do with him personally. It is his brother who should have been arrested, but the brother cannot be found, so they have taken this man instead who, of course, is perfectly innocent."

" But surely the brother——" I began.

" Well it is said that even the brother is not wholly responsible, but that the debt was really contracted some two hundred years ago and has accumulated by degrees to such immense proportions that the creditors have resolved to go to law in the matter ! "

Alas ! for the innocent victims of a misdeed committed by an unknown ancestor some two hundred years ago ! No wonder the poor bespectacled scholar looked depressed.

From the tiny paved courtyard, which was partly occupied by washstands more or less in use, we passed under a crumbling archway, and through a series of tumbledown sheds, the walls of which were black with grease and the floors brown with slime. One had to pick one's way in the dim light. An old copper-like stove presided over by the kitchen god—a little smouldering charcoal and a few pots and pans—suggested an improvised kitchen, which, alas, ended in a rubbish heap and refuse indescribable. A door in the wall and a flight of battered stone steps led down into the "Marshalsea" prison. The main building was open on one side to the outer air, or as much of the outer air that could be got into a minute court the size of a small chicken-run closely surrounded by buildings.

On those winter afternoons of our first visits the light was dull, the air cold and raw, the mud floor glistened with moisture. One or two opium patients, more fortunate than the rest, carried a fire basket, one or two were huddled up under their quilts on beds of straw. In a niche of the stained and crumbling wall stood a bearded idol with black unseeing eyes, "gazing" into space. The prison was crowded with men, young and old, and three or four women. The latter were chaperoned by the jailor's wife, a hard-featured little woman busily engaged in culinary operations at a charcoal fire in a corner of the "chicken-run."

They were not all prisoners these people, some were relatives, some friends, who had come to "hsi" (play !).

The cake seller had also appeared on the scenes and was doing a brisk trade. One or two savoury meals were in progress, and, on the whole, in spite of the dirt, the discomfort, the unspeakably dreary circumstances in which they found themselves, a general air of satisfaction seemed to prevail.

This invincible cheerfulness in such distressing surroundings surely argues a defect of imaginative power.

One or two took another and more natural view of the situation, amongst them the well-to-do octogenarian from the cloth firm, standing there in his fur-lined gown holding his long tobacco pipe in slender hands, the finger-nails of which were nearly an inch in length, and gracefully curved; but "money covers many sins," as the Chinese proverb has it, and after a few days engaged in "talking price" a satisfactory conclusion was arrived at between the assessors of the fine and the assessed, and Sing Fan was to be once again set at liberty. "He must continue to eat the black smoke" he said, and Ba Giao Si agreed that to give it up at such an advanced age would assuredly cost him his life. Long experience had made her an expert in these matters. During the last twenty years many had been permanently cured under her treatment, and during this present year over a thousand had passed through her hands—including the "Marshalsea prisoners" and a certain number of private patients in an opium refuge of her own. The latter, by paying fees of a few dollars, underwent the so-called Malay cure,* and had the good fortune to escape many of the un-

* A preparation made from the branches and leaves of a species of combretum grown in the Malay peninsula, which, when prepared and administered, according to certain directions, usually effects a cure in fourteen days.

pleasant complications from which few of those who break off opium in the usual way are immune.

The Government authorities, not unnaturally, declined the extra expense of the Malay treatment in the case of the patients in the prison, the majority of whom had been brought in by the police.

There was no doubt that in this part of the country, at least, the authorities were in earnest in their efforts to suppress the opium trade. All pipes, lamps, boiling pots, all that belonged to an opium smoker's paraphernalia were confiscated by the authorities. In the course of a few hours every opium den along the river front was done away with, and on the first month of the second year of the "People's Kingdom," a public burning took place, not only of confiscated utensils, but of packet after packet of the drug itself.

Similar measures had been adopted in other places, but rumour whispered that some of the opium burnt was only brown sugar, just sufficiently "flavoured" to afford the orthodox smell.

In the "City of the River Orchid,"* however, there were to be no half-measures. On the sunny terrace in front of the Government school, coolies had been coming and going half the morning carrying material for the bonfire, pipes ornamented with chased silver, inlaid with jade and ivory and other costly luxuries of the eater of the "foreign dirt" were to be turned into fuel, but more valuable than all these things were the packages of opium—hundreds, nay, possibly thousands of pounds' worth. The "knower of affairs," as the official is called in these republican days, lent his somewhat shabby

* Province of Chekiang.

THE "CITY OF THE RIVER ORCHID." (STEPS ON WHICH PUBLIC EXECUTIONS USED TO TAKE PLACE.)

A PUBLIC BURNING OF CONFISCATED UTENSILS AND OPIUM PIPES, AND PACKET AFTER PACKET OF THE DRUG ITSELF.

presence to the scenes. In old times he would have arrived in state in his official chair with his many bearers, his Yamen runners in scarlet silk and black velvet, the red umbrella borne aloft and other official insignia, but these days are over (for the nonce). Shorn of his gay trappings the "knower of affairs" wore a foreign felt hat, like any ordinary citizen, and the plainest of Chinese gowns, for silk is tabooed just now. He covered with an air of haste the consciousness of his own lack of dignity and the difference which these things make in the eyes of the masses, who hardly realise, as yet, that "officials are officials for a' that."

Finally the signal was given to set the fire alight. Already the mass of fuel had been drenched in paraffin, and in an instant the flames sprang up higher and higher, scorching the white face of the "spirit wall" in the background.

The people gazing with bovine expression fell back because of the sparks and the fierce heat. They looked neither glad nor sorry. These were momentous days, for China was rising slowly with her massive strength to fight against a curse of long years standing.

Meanwhile the people kept their thoughts to themselves or passed on their way smiling. Could it be as some were not slow to whisper, that not a few of these worthy citizens, apparently so obedient and amenable were still the rulers of the situation. The Yamen captives were by no means representative of the opium smokers of the city. Some of the worst offenders, being rich and influential, could more easily escape detection, or, as a last resource, silence detectives.

Our strangely cheerful prisoners had doubtless methods

of alleviation of which we knew nothing. Now and again some ill-laid scheme leaked out. Sticks of sugar cane were discovered which had been scooped out and filled with opium ; hollow bamboo poles of sedan chairs had been stuffed with the forbidden drug, and even the ears of pigs had been utilised as receptacles.

The other day a new kind of pill was offered for sale in the prison, the ingredients of which consisted of soot, yellow ochre, buckwheat flour, salicylate of soda and Buddha's fingers (a species of lemon, valued for its scent), not that one could expect much from such an unpromising mixture.

Last week a new proclamation appeared on the city walls, issued by an official in connection with the " Opium Suppression Bureau," advising all men to take warning by the " terrible fate " of India.

" The Indians," so ran the document, " did not do anything but cultivate opium. Some smoked it, some dealt in it, all apparently living a dreamy fool's life, until the British invaded and destroyed their country without their feeling the blow. Don't you think it a pity ? See the red-turbaned policemen in Shanghai, they are among their best class people, so they have been chosen to come here and do the slaves' work. The rest stay in India and endure tyrannical treatment from the British, being even worse treated than hogs and dogs. . . . If you do not mend your ways, I, your brother, can love you no longer, and endure you no longer ; the only alternative will be to send for a strong military force to arrest and punish you to the utmost extent of the law "—and so forth. The " brother " was evidently much in earnest, but even the worthy " Bao Djen " laughed at his description of India.

Bao Djen had risen from the rank of a domestic servant to that of a useful dispenser and medical assistant. There are many of the same ilk in China to-day, young men of undoubted ability but few educational advantages, who, alas, are seldom content to remain in a subordinate position, but with the conceit and the courage of ignorance set up as full-blown "foreign" doctors in places where there are none to dispute their claim, and for a time at least make a fat living with the "golden thanks" (the doctor's fees) that come their way. The patients, fortunately, are not easily killed, and can drink with impunity a mixture made up of castor oil, quinine, sulphuric acid and eye lotion—a favourite prescription of one of these self-made doctors.

Bao Djen, however, much looked up to at the Opium Prison, is beginning to have a great opinion of his own powers.

Ba Giao Si pointed out to him the other day that long finger nails, supposed to indicate immunity from hard work, were, in these enlightened times, both ridiculous and insanitary, whereupon Bao Djen gave a superior smile and made answer:—"We doctors find them exceedingly convenient," and forthwith used his longest for measuring out a dose of quinine.

CHAPTER IV

A Chunk of Raw Ginger

Just round the corner of the tiny lane three feet wide at the back of our house, lives the second son of the family of Tang. He has taken a literary degree and "wears good clothes and eats a basin of good rice" (is well off). He is, moreover, the happy husband of two wives, who, marvellous to relate, live together in perfect amity, and now, at last, he has become the proud father of a "pearl in the palm" (a son). Thanks greatly to Ba Giao Si's skill and kindness this new arrival seems likely to live and thrive, whereas for many years now, with the exception of one girl, who, being a girl, hardly counted, the baby Tang's have carried out word for word the old French saying :

> "On entre, on crie et c'est la vie,
> On crie, on sort et c'est la mort."

The happiest person in the house at the birth of the child is wife number one, who by the way is getting on in years and is *not* the baby's mother. Some seven or eight years ago father Tang, in despair of ever having a boy of his own, purchased some one else's, Deh En by name, and was bringing him up as the son and heir of the house, but even Deh En, who was of course too young to fully appreciate the situation, reflected in his smiling face the satisfaction of the rest of the household, and assisted in the hanging up of the chunk of raw ginger over the main

entrance in token of a birth in the family. The Tang house, like many other houses of the well-to-do, showed few signs of prosperity. That "order is heaven's first law" is a truth very imperfectly understood in China, and one is often appalled at the dirt, the accumulation of rubbish, and the ill-regulated light and air of these Chinese homes. The guest hall where we sat in state was open to all the winds of heaven, the mud floor was very little warmer than the street outside, and not much cleaner. A brown hen of inquiring nature was prying about for a lost crumb, and dust lay thickly on all the lower limbs of chairs and tables. Sayings from the classics inscribed on red paper and pasted on the walls gave the only touch of colour. There were no cosy corners, no armchairs, no possibility of a fire. The elderly wife rested her pinched feet on a wicker basket filled with smouldering charcoal. She seemed in high spirits, and chuckled contentedly over her rival's child, calling it all the pet names she could think of, such as "little louse" and "tiny dog."

In the darkened room round the corner the mother was "doing well" on a tonic of walnuts and brown sugar. Outside in the guest hall there was too much air—in the bedroom there was too little—and hardly any light at all, for windows in an outside wall of a bedroom are, of all things, unlucky. If there should happen to be one, care must be taken to keep it closed and covered, otherwise the demons would rush in and try their best to destroy a boy baby, though in all probability would pay no attention to a girl.

Very little air indeed could get through to the occupant of the bed, which was heavily curtained round with blue

hangings. It was a handsome bedstead with a canopy of wood richly carved and gilded, and absorbing one entire end of the room. Round the walls dark wood cupboards and piles of red lacquer boxes, bundles, baskets, pots and crocks and rubbish of all descriptions left little of the floor space unoccupied.

Master Tang was still young enough to display the "racial mark" to advantage—a black bruise near the end of the spine—traces, say the ignorant, of a recent chastisement administered by the goddess in the other world "to speed the parting guest." It is to be seen on almost every Chinese baby in the first days after birth. Baby, however, in those first weeks of his existence is seldom, if ever, bathed, and scarcely ever on view except in full dress. One marvels that his delicate skin is not rubbed red and raw by the coarse garments—adult clothes in miniature—in which he is clad. A long dark skirt is added to this weird costume, which is turned up over the feet and tied round the tiny mite much as one would wrap a parcel in paper.

A foster mother (the luxury of the well-to-do in China) had been procured for the new arrival, a rosy-cheeked, young woman with bright "boot button" eyes. On one occasion, having been sent with her charge to ask medical advice of Ba Giao Si, she sat ruminating in bovine fashion while the "teacher sister" held the busily screaming baby. It was, therefore, somewhat unexpected when, at the moment of leave taking, the phlegmatic creature, despite the fact that the baby was safely back again in her arms, turned hastily calling eagerly to the little one to follow, for, alas, one of his souls had escaped with the falling tears!

Those who have been unfortunate in the rearing of a family, or whose baby may happen to be weakly, look round amongst the neighbours for a strong mother of healthy boys, who will be asked to adopt the child as her "dry son." This implies no responsibility on the part of the adopted mother. It is hoped, however, that as she is evidently a person "born under a lucky star" a share of the good health enjoyed by her own children may fall to the lot of the child whom she has consented to look upon as her "dry son," although she may have little or nothing to do with him from one year's end to the other!

Whilst the Tang family rejoiced over their good fortune, the wife of the prosperous owner of the bamboo shop, at the corner of the big street, bewailed her ill luck, weeping sadly as she caressed her new-born baby, for it was a girl, and there were two already, and this one she knew she would not be allowed to keep. The Po-Po (mother-in-law) had pronounced its doom without a moment's hesitation. They would not kill the child, no, but just let it die, and a hundred cash (about $2\frac{1}{2}d.$) to a beggar would settle the rest. There need be no more expense, no more trouble, and the young mother could bestir herself again and make herself useful in the house. Had she given birth to a son, well then, of course, a little care and rest would have been necessary, but as matters stood, it was absurd on the face of it to lie in bed and pretend to be ill.

Baby, fortunately for itself, did not take long to die, and wrapped in an old bit of matting the bundle was consigned to one of the "Flowery ones"—a member of the loathsome army of beggars—creatures with matted filth clogged hair, covered with sores and dirt, who share

with the dogs the privileges of scavengers in a Chinese city.

The price agreed had been a hundred cash and the place of burial suggested, the "Kuh Tong Tah" (the tower of withered babes), but the "Kuh Tong Tah" to the beggar's knowledge was inconveniently full just now, the very opening through which the bundles were thrust was more than half blocked up with tiny limbs. Besides, the tower meant half a mile's walk or more across the fields. It would be less trouble and quite as efficacious to put his burden down on the bit of grave-strewn land outside the city wall, and give that high falsetto cry recognised by Chinese dogs as an indication that a scavenger is needed. Even if any one saw him the matter was of too common an occurrence to signify. The "respectable" woman who lived near the city gate through which the beggar would pass had openly admitted that she herself had had eleven children—all girls—and out of them all, ten were not "permitted to live."

There is still another way of disposing of unwanted offspring. Unless one desires, however, to proclaim the matter on the housetops, it necessitates an expedition after dark through the labyrinth of black greasy lanes in the neighbourhood of the Yamen. Just inside an open doorway there stands both day and night a hooded basket, furnished with a few handfuls of straw, in other words the public cradle of a foundling hospital. As we passed that way the other day we saw the gleanings from the basket cradle, spread out on a quilt, like miniature mummies enveloped in shapeless wrappings. The two wee babies were weirdly still and silent as though they

realised that by some unlucky chance they had made a bad start in life. The caretaker and his wife and a large assortment of friends and relations appeared to use the "Nourish the Children Hall" as a kind of social club, but work was slack just now. Last week there had been eleven waifs, now there were only two. The plump young woman, who nursed them each in turn, assured us that she had also had charge of the eleven. Their absence from the scene suggested gruesome possibilities, but we were mistaken. Girl babies * had been much in demand of late, some to be turned into slaves, and some into embryo brides. Not only can these valuable assets be obtained, free of charge at the foundling hospital, but the wealthy citizens, who support the place financially, make a small allowance to cover present expenses.

An important moment in the lives of all well-brought-up babies, during these enlightened times in the "City of the River Orchid," is the day of vaccination. The "heavenly flower disease" is especially dreaded in the second moon, and there is no season of the year when the country-side is entirely free from the scourge.

Those who can obtain the services of the foreign doctor for the "sowing of the foreign pox" as they call it, consider themselves lucky. Not only is the foreigner's skill greater, but it costs less than that of their own countrymen, who, moreover, have an expensive custom of charging an extra fee should the child be a boy.

One bright wintry afternoon we trudged forth to a village nestling amongst the trees at the foot of the hills where thirteen small patients were waiting to be vaccinated.

* The foundlings are almost invariably girls.

The tiny serpentine paths, often little more than mud ridges, wriggled round the vegetable fields instead of across, in order to avoid the straight lines patronised by evil spirits.

In the guest hall of a prosperous farm-house we sat down to wait until preparations for the momentous occasion had been made, for no Chinese baby, of any standing, may be vaccinated, unless first attired in the most costly garments of its baby wardrobe—the brightest coloured silk and velvet, the richest embroidery, satin bibs weighed down with embroidered bats and other lucky emblems—silken hats embellished by brass idols and tinkling bells, by tigers' faces worked in silk, and other preservatives from danger.

The farmer's wife had evidently not expected her foreign guests. Other visitors had arrived before us—three middle-aged women who, with the youthful son of the house, a mere boy of twelve or fourteen, sat round the centre table, deeply engrossed in a game of cards. As one watched the flimsy slips of paper, very thin and very narrow, fluttering from the dealer's hand (a single pack contains 150) one realised the likeness that they still bear to the leaves of trees, of which the first playing cards ever known in China (and possibly in the world) are said to have consisted.

Though the gains and losses paid in copper cash (about 40 = 1*d.*) were of no large amount, our farm-house players were as intent on the game as any Monte Carlo gamblers, and seemed quite oblivious to our presence in the room.

We sat and sipped our green tea and partook of hard-boiled eggs and melon seeds, and still no sign of the

thirteen small patients. They had been sent for, they assured us, and would soon be here. The winter's afternoon, however, was drawing in—we should be benighted unless we started back before long, but at this point an invitation arrived to go and drink tea and partake of "little heart" (confectionery) at another house in the village, where it seemed the babies in their gala clothes were assembled.

Two out of the thirteen certainly were there, dressed in pink and scarlet, magenta, purple and blue and unadorned by idols and tigers, for the parents having "eaten the Christian religion" had lost their fear of demons.

"Where are the others?" we inquired. We had come all this way by especial request. Why this long delay?

The mystery leaked out at last! The date was an even date—the day was unlucky. A baby vaccinated on an even date would surely die!

Ba Giao Si's medical reputation was great in the "City of the River Orchid"—so great that even the idol in a neighbouring temple was supposed to have recommended her services! A patient suffering from an internal disease who had tried one after another of the native "medicine men" turned at last to the oracle in the temple for advice. The consultation resulted in a slip of paper on which the two words were inscribed: "North East." Starting off eagerly, though somewhat wonderingly, in that direction the sick man came in with a friend who solved the mystery. "North East!" he said, "that can be no other than Ba Giao Si's house. Her skill is great. If you go there one evening, you are well

that same evening. If you go there in the morning, you are well that same morning."

"Medicine cures the man who is not fated to die," say the Chinese. They are great lovers of medicine of all kinds, and though westerners recoil from some of the ingredients of native prescriptions, the strange efficacy of some, at least, is admitted without a doubt. The brains of a baby, for instance, baked slowly and carefully in mud have been known to cure an obstinate form of skin disease. Abbé Huc mentions a cure for deafness, derived from a plant that grows in the north of China, which restored the power of hearing to a patient whose case had been pronounced hopeless by "the doctors of four nationalities."

Whether earth worms, rolled in honey and swallowed alive are really of any use in stomach disorders one would almost doubt, though they might serve indeed to bring matters to a crisis and thereby accelerate recovery. "I have no more of the mixture you had before," said the foreign doctor to a wishful patient.

"That is of no importance!" came the answer. "What I want now is some life-saving medicine."

CHAPTER V

The Phœnixes in Concord Sing.*

It was a "four coat" cold day, as the Chinese say. We had ridden twenty "li" (nearly seven miles) in our sedan chairs, along the narrow paved paths through interminable fields of vegetables and fields of wheat, now and again passing a clump of white walled houses hedged around by the glossy-leafed camphor trees, and on, once more into the open country in the direction of the hills. There were few people about, and no sign of any festivity, but we had arrived, it seemed, at our destination. A turn in the path brought us within sight of the house, a farmhouse, large and substantial, surrounded by the usual bit of untidy "no man's land" which it never appears to be anybody's business to keep in order.

So cold and comfortless was the guest hall with its floor of hardened mud, and unclosed doors and draughty walls that the outer air was warm in comparison. We were, however, destined to spend the day in a still chillier abode. Our hostess, the bridegroom's mother, requested us to go up higher to the bridal chamber, a spacious apartment of an attic-like nature divided by frail partitions into bedrooms and store cupboards. Even a corner of the bridal chamber had been utilised as a receptacle for a stack of empty corn cobs stored away for fuel. A handsome four-post bedstead, carved and gilded, hung

* A wedding air.

with dark blue curtains, occupied almost the centre of the room, fortunately hiding the corn cobs from view, not that a Chinese housewife would consider useful things of that kind in any way out of place.

In other particulars, the room was comfortably furnished according to approved ideas—a carved and gilt cupboard to match the bed, a dressing chest of dark polished wood, a mirror in a black frame inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and a goodly array of scarlet lacquered boxes, new and shining, containing probably the greater part of the bride's trousseau.

We sat in state at a large table with our tea cups in front of us, face to face with two silken clad and much embarrassed bridesmaids, awaiting the arrival of the bride. Above the bed curtains a tiny looking-glass for the scaring of demons, and a sprig of cypress and an iris leaf had been attached, the latter symbolic of good luck, the former of long life.

A deafening cannonade of fire crackers announced the approach of the " Flowery Chair." Peeping from the tiny bedroom windows, each window was just large enough to admit of one adult head and no more, we watched the little procession advancing. The chair closely shrouded in scarlet hangings, richly embroidered with flowers and tigers and other lucky symbols, was preceded by small boys carrying lighted lanterns bobbing at the ends of poles—these were to guide the bride's spirit through the dark night to her new home, the idea being that our day is the spirits' night and *vice versâ*.

The crowd gathered round, but the invisible occupant of the chair must be taken from her scarlet box away from the public gaze. Our first vision of her was of a

stiff "wooden" doll-like figure, enveloped in drapery, being borne up the stairs to the bridal chamber in the arms of a male relative of the bridegroom—(none of the girl's own relations are present on these occasions).

Having deposited his immobile burden on the edge of the bed, he slowly removed the scarlet cloth that covered her head with two sticks of sugar cane, which he afterwards deposited on the top of the bed-canopy, allowing the scarlet cloth to dangle from the projecting ends, a symbol this of conjugal felicity.

At this juncture the "woman of luck" (mistress of ceremony) took command of the situation, her chief qualification being that her husband was still living and her male children well and strong.

While the bride washed her face and donned her wedding garments, the bridesmaids sat like wax figures showing as little interest in the proceedings as the bride herself. The "woman of luck" saw to the hair dressing, and artificial tresses were deftly wound into the girl's own long hair, and the whole twisted tightly into a big ball at the back of the head and "trussed" with golden skewers. With an expression of boredom, she rubbed white powder into her face till she looked more like a ghost than a bride, but rouge is contrary to etiquette at a wedding, and all the colour is concentrated in the clothes—the "Phœnix" crown and the crimson robes, the silk skirt of many coloured stripes, the tunic of brilliant scarlet silk adorned by a flapping collar of blue and black, magenta and gold, and embroidered with bats signifying joy, with butterflies representing happiness, with peaches that mean longevity, and peonies that stand for wealth. The whole costume was fitly sur-

mounted by the Phœnix crown, an ungainly erection of golden tinsel sparkling with artificial rubies and sapphires, turquoises, pearls and other gems. A fringe of blue beads veiled the ghostly face, and rose-pink paper flowers filled in the cavity at the back of the crown. As the Chinese proverb has it: "Three-tenths is beauty, seven-tenths is dress."

Though neither the bride nor the bridegroom were Christians, the grandfather and the mother had both, as the saying goes, "eaten the Christian religion," and had especially requested that a marriage service should be held.

The little bride, therefore, attired in her finery and followed by her companions hobbled down the staircase with her bound feet and took her place by the side of her youthful and stony-faced bridegroom.

After the final ceremony of the two wine cups, sipped by first the one and then the other, the "unloving" pair, who had never seen each other before, ascended the staircase followed by the "woman of luck" and her husband (who by the way are called "the happy couple"). They sat like two Dutch dolls on the edge of the bridal bed, paying no attention either to each other or any one else. A Chinese bride is compared to a dove, not because of her gentleness, but on account of her quietness and stupidity. We seized this seemingly propitious moment to offer our congratulations, taking care to address ourselves exclusively to the bridegroom, as the bride must on no account be included. The correct wish on these occasions is that the newly-married pair may be able to embrace both grandchildren and great grandchildren, but one should be careful not to look at the bridegroom

while speaking, as this would mean appropriating his answering salute as especially intended for oneself! One more ceremony must be observed before the hero of the day can effect his escape from the bridal chamber—the ceremony of "poached eggs in syrup." The bride merely looked at hers, but the bridegroom gulped his down much as one gulps down a dose of medicine, and without more ado, he disappeared just as a frightened rabbit might bolt into its hole. The feast was now the order of the day.

Downstairs four tables (eight pairs of chopsticks to each table) had been prepared for the thirty-two male guests. Upstairs in the bridal chamber one table was sufficient for the rest of the party, and the bride herself must taste no food that day except surreptitiously. It was a long drawn-out penance that wedding feast in the chilly upper room on that cold winter's day.

One course followed another, from dumplings stuffed with garlic and swimming in fishy gravy to dishes of sugared pork fat and bowls of dried fish the size of large pins which, alas, we mistook for shredded bamboo till the putrid flavour of the first cautious mouthful dispelled the delusion. "It is always well to have something in the mouth" goes the saying, and monkey nuts and melon seeds filled in the intervals between the courses, but the former were uncooked and less appetising than usual owing to the superstition that cooked monkey nuts (from a play on the Chinese words) offered at a marriage feast would mean still-born offspring; the vermicelli was in strips several feet long suggesting the idea of long life to the married pair, and the rolls of steamed bread had been decorated with lumps of red, the festive colour. "Work

may be hastened," says the proverb, "but not food." The feast would continue on and off for three days. Surely we would stop and "hsi" (play). Could we not, at least, stay till the next day ?

At last, however, having sat patiently for some hours, and seeing no signs of a natural end to the repast, we forced our way out amidst loud protestations, and made our farewells.

The white-faced bride still sat with bowed head and drooping mouth, looking as though some great sorrow had cast its shadow over her life.

In this same province of Chekiang, a wedding of a very different character took place not long ago.

In one of the wealthy houses of the place there lived an official family of some standing. The only son and heir, a student at the capital, had been for some time affianced to a girl, who, in approved Chinese style, had been introduced into the house as his future bride a few years before, and was being brought up, and trained in the way she should go by the lad's mother. Poor Precious Pearl! From the first she and the Po-Po (mother-in-law) had failed to get on together. No wonder, said those who knew the family intimately, for she who held the reins of government was one of those overbearing, headstrong women who quarrel with every one and refuse to listen to reason.

Many a dark story was whispered from ear to ear of the cruel treatment meted out to the future daughter-in-law, and when the end came, there were few who expressed themselves surprised, all that they marvelled at was the means that the girl had chosen, an overdose of opium would have been an easier death to die, but to

hang oneself, that must have taken courage indeed! Precious Pearl was a girl in a thousand—every one said so, and while the miserable tyrant of a mother-in-law was condemned on all sides, no one had anything but praise for the girl. Great was the excitement to know what kind of revenge would be taken by the relatives of Precious Pearl, who, though they lived some distance off, appeared on the scenes with almost incredible speed.

The son, the future bridgeroom, had been sent for by "lightning letter" (telegram)—so much was certain, and there were rumours that the wedding was to take place after all! The bereaved family had insisted on this and had, moreover, claimed that the most costly presents imaginable should be purchased in readiness, so that the bridegroom's family should be put to every possible expense. They congratulated themselves also on the fact that the young man once legally married, albeit to a *dead bride*, would never again be able to offer the honourable position of "first wife" to any other. Not that this was of much consequence under the circumstances, the expense of the whole affair was a far more weighty matter, to say nothing of the inevitable "loss of face!" The wedding of a student to a corpse! It was indeed, even in China, an unusual occurrence, so unusual, the wonder was that the old "nai-nai" (woman) who lived at the gates had not insisted on more than a dollar for her part of the performance. It was she who held the body upright during the ceremony—the poor little dead body of Precious Pearl in the "Phœnix crown and crimson robe" of a most costly description. And the Po-Po! Where was she? All looked eagerly to see how this hard-tongued woman who, by her cruelty, had

been the cause of this calamity, would bear up under so humiliating an experience, but they looked in vain. The Po-Po had disappeared, no one knew whither. For long after, the great house was left shut up and deserted.

"Truly!" said the wise ones, "the ancients were right and when the hen begins to crow, it is a sure sign of trouble."

Not far from the scene of this tragic wedding another little embryo bride was living day by day a life of bitterness, and though the circumstances were well known to all around, in their Chinese fashion, no one raised a finger in active protest until too late. Then when the news spread from house to house that the child was dead, done to death by the unrestrained savagery of the future mother-in-law, the neighbours arose, clamouring for revenge. They would not refer the matter to the officials, it would be cheaper and more satisfactory to take the punishment of the woman into their own hands. They bethought them of a plan by which she should be made to suffer in more ways than one. With the dead body of the child fastened to her back, they compelled her to show herself, day by day, in the streets of the city that all might see her shame.

New China despises many of the picturesque wedding customs as only fit for the "foolish people" who know no better.

Not long ago a Chinese friend of mine was married in the "new style." "What is that like?" I asked.

"Oh, all the same as your way," she answered, "only no prayers," and as far as I could gather, very little else.

In Shanghai the new time wedding procession is apt to combine, with rather ludicrous results, the old and the new. The soldier in semi-Western khaki-coloured uniform is the most typical figure of modern days in China, hence an up-to-date wedding party likes to be heralded by a troop of sham soldiers (in uniforms borrowed for the occasion), some of whom with drums and trumpets are playing martial airs.

At one of these "military" weddings, the other day, a large and uncomfortable goose occupied with much trepidation the seat of honour in the "Flowery Chair." An unusual sight, in spite of the fact that a goose and a gander are held in China to be symbolic of conjugal affection and fidelity, and on the day of a wedding a punctilious bridegroom will sometimes present his father-in-law with one of these faithful birds in token of the fact that he will never marry again!

Some Shanghai brides foregoing the "Phœnix crown and crimson robes" and the silk cloth over the face as dowdy and old-fashioned, effect a compromise as regards the veil by wearing a *pair of blue goggles* during the wedding ceremony, and the white drapery of Western brides. Thereby (by means of the goggles) is kept up a semblance at least of the old custom which prescribed that the bride and the bridegroom must not see each other face to face until the wedding is over, a custom that needless, to say, is more and more on the wane, and which even in the old days, the bridegroom often succeeded in circumventing on the sly.

Still, however, in country districts, things remain much as they were, and few have the temerity to neglect a

comparison of the birthday card * and therefore run the risk of marrying a man born under the tiger to a woman born under the goat or *vice versâ*, as this would mean certain disaster to the goat. At a betrothal ceremony, at which I happened to be present, the price of the prospective bride, a schoolgirl, had already been decided, and half the sum handed over in advance. A goodly array of silver dollars, and some handsome silk garments, and a pair of bracelets tied by a scarlet thread (symbolising the conjugal bond) for the bride were piled upon a large tray for all to see. Upon each dollar a strip of scarlet paper had been neatly pasted bearing the character of "Hsi" (happiness). The girl herself, of course, was not present, and the party consisted almost entirely of the male relatives of the respective families. "The choice that you deign to make of my coarse and stupid daughter to become the wife of your son," says the father of the future bride, "shows me that you esteem my poor and cold family more than it deserves"—and so forth.

Rumours have reached them of the strange ways of the new woman in China in these days of the People's Kingdom. They shake their heads in horror. Did not the ancients say, that if we dispense with the decree of parents and the intervention of a go-between, and arrange marriages for ourselves we shall all be thieves. Does not the proverb maintain that "A go-between is as necessary as an axe to cut wood."

* The hour, the day, the year of the child's birth, and the animal presiding over the year are registered on the card.

CHAPTER VI

"A White Affair" *

The life of old Ah-Ba-La-Han the farmer in the village of "River Sand" had long been like a candle in the wind. His springs and autumns were many. Therefore, it was no surprise to hear that he had "passed out of this generation."

For some years now the old man had been a Christian, and this morning his son appeared to borrow some funeral clothes and to invite the "teacher sister" to come to the funeral, which to suit our convenience should be put off till after breakfast instead of taking place at daybreak according to local custom.

It was a bitterly cold morning, and the road was as the Chinese say, "like a sheet of jade," ice in the puddles and frost on the leaves of the vegetables in the fields, and overhead a leaden snow-weighted sky.

There was no one about, only an old man wearing a crimson bonnet and a purple gown, hurrying along ahead of us by the path across the fields which, with its twists and turns, baffles the proclivities of evil spirits.

At the house of the dead man a cheerful not to say hilarious party had assembled.

As privileged guests we were invited into an inner chamber, presented with hard-boiled eggs and tea, and assigned seats close beside the coffin. The "golden

* A funeral.

peck " (coffin) was covered by a crimson pall, and rested on a bed of straw.

Meanwhile, first one and then another completed his or her funeral costume in our presence. The eldest son, being the chief mourner, and his wife wrapped themselves in shapeless garments of hempen sackcloth with a head-dress, akin to a biretta in shape, made of a coarse hemp gauze, and adorned by pompoms of cotton wool suspended on wires, projected to a point below the eyes for the purpose of catching the tears.

In these days, in true accordance with Chinese ways, the pompoms serve to represent the tears themselves. Mourning caps of unbleached calico were handed round to the men and boys, and all the other guests, ourselves included, were given " cloths to cry with," in other words a strip of unbleached calico, which when worn around the head provides the " complimentary " mourning necessary for the occasion.

The more noise the better, apparently, at a Chinese funeral. A hubbub of voices arose around the coffin, as the bearers gathered together to carry it from the house. What with the levity of some, the garrulity of others, the scene was anything but peaceful.

" Would the ' teacher sisters ' condescend to sit slowly for a while—all things are not yet ready ! "

We waited, therefore, in the now deserted coffin chamber, till the beating of gongs, and the nasal squeaking of wind instruments suggested that proceedings had commenced, and then passed through the outer apartment where women were busy preparing the funeral feast. A black cow stood close beside the stove looking at the culinary operations with plaintive eyes, almost as though

its bovine mind appreciated that which the human beings had failed to grasp, namely, the solemnity of the occasion. Not that the outward jubilation of some of the mourners could be taken seriously, for as all men know that "to smile when speaking of the dead" is merely a matter of form demanded by time-honoured etiquette, and there are certain times when the loud cries of the "death howl" are prescribed.

The appearance of the "teacher sisters" on the scene at this inopportune moment had taken our hosts by surprise. Old Ah-Ba-La-Han had particularly desired a Christian funeral, but Ah-Ba-La-Han's widow felt ill at ease in the matter, and insisted on observing one at least of the old rites. A few feet away from the coffin, a sacrifice to the dead was in progress, a volume of smoke and tongues of flame issued from a heap of burning straw, the same straw that had been in the dead man's room, and which was associated in the minds of the worshippers with one of the three souls, two at least of which were now disembodied. The mourners in their sackcloth wrappings knelt in a circle round the fire, their heads bowed upon the ground, to the sound of the wailing music, and the howling of mourners. In an instant, however, at a whisper that the "foreign teachers" had emerged from the house, the whole scene changed. Those kneeling sprang to their feet and even kicked apart the smouldering straw with an air of contempt, and the loud wailing came to an abrupt end.

Villagers, curious and talkative, gathered round as the burial service was read. Even some of the mourners allowed their attention to stray and discussed other matters in loud tones. Too much solemnity would

evidently be looked upon as a bad omen. In the books of the ancients it is written that " in an affair of mourning there should be urgency."

The procession started on its way at last, a disorderly troop, led by a motley company of ragged urchins bearing banners and gaily coloured flags, followed by a straggling stream of musicians beating gongs and clashing cymbals, and blowing on wind instruments which emitted a nasal sound like that of bagpipes played out of tune. Etiquette demands that all shall move forward at a quick pace. The coffin with its red pall, the crimson umbrella with floating streamers without which no funeral is complete, the mourners in their creamy sackcloth, the flags and banners, red and blue, formed a picturesque line of colour as the procession made its way by the tiny serpentine paths across the open fields. We found ourselves at last on the top of a high bank beside a heap of up-turned earth and steaming lime. A niche, just large enough to take the head of the coffin, had been scooped out in the hollow of the bank, and thickly sprinkled with lime and ashes. Eventually the earth would be built up in the form of a mound. Had Ah-Ba-La-Han not " eaten " the doctrine of the Christians it was now the moment for the ceremony connected with the ancestral tablet. The son or the sons would have knelt down crying forth " Father rise "—whereupon the soul of the dead man without more ado would have entered the wooden tablet placed for that purpose on the lid of the coffin. The " dotting of the tablet " performed by some person of note with a vermiiion pencil later on would, so to speak, have ratified the first ceremony and made assurance doubly sure. In Ah-Ba-La-Han's case little more remained to be done.

The near relatives had brought with them mourning staves, bamboo sticks bound round with strips of paper, these they cast into the grave, with the straw ropes which they had worn round their waists. The eldest son and the widow flung off their sackcloth garments and the head-dress with the tear catching blobs just as an actor might hastily divest himself of his stage costume on the fall of the curtain.

Were these things too to be buried with the coffin? Hardly, for as this sackcloth mourning is often either borrowed or hired such a proceeding would have accorded ill with Chinese economy.

Leaving our hosts to enjoy the funeral feast we started on our homeward way, followed by the loud entreaties of the widow to remain.

Poor old Ah-Ba-La-Han, though still surrounded by kith and kin, had expressed himself more than once conscious of the fact that he had outstayed his welcome.

Alas, for the filial piety of these modern days. It appears chiefly to take the form of ceremonious attention to graves and tablets, more as a safeguard than anything else, to prevent possible retaliation on the part of neglected spirits, or as propitiation to the dwellers in "the peaceful sunlight of the nine springs" (Hades) in the hope of favours to come.

Not far from here lives a garrulous old lady, exceedingly unpopular in her own family. Not long ago her sons, driven to desperation by her long tongue and her large appetite, attempted to drown her in a pond, but the old lady, to the surprise of those concerned, reappeared on the scenes and since then, not unnaturally, the relation-

ship between her and the rest of the household has been more than usually strained.

Had the crime been proved, the delinquents would have paid the penalty of death by the "shameful and slow" process, but as it was, the whole affair passed unnoticed.

In another case a poor old woman who had suffered terribly at the hands of her daughter-in-law put an end to her troubles by drowning herself in a pond at the back of the house. The officials came in state according to Chinese law, and held an inquest close to the spot where the death had taken place. Had the daughter-in-law's guilt been established not only would she herself have forfeited her life, but the tongues of the neighbours on either side would have been slit in two! No wonder then that the case remained unproved and that the culprit escaped.

Soon after Ah-Ba-La-Han's death, a near neighbour of ours passed over to the "happy vale of ancestral longevity" (died). Water for washing the corpse was purchased in the approved style from the dragon, to do which, a tea-cup was carried to the river side, and two copper cash thrown into the water whilst the little vessel was filled to the brim.

Ablutions depending on the contents of a tea-cup sound somewhat superficial. In the land of the Celestials, however, where the little so often stands for the much, and the symbol for the real thing, it is more than likely that, thanks to the tea-cup and the two cash, all the water used on this occasion was held to have been purchased from the dragon. Should it, for some reason, be impossible to avoid one of the ill-omened days, called in the

almanac days of "reduplication of death," there are several ways out of the difficulty, one being to catch a cockroach or bed bug or some other even more loathsome insect, to imprison it in a little box which is placed under the coffin and to call it a "substituting body."

On the evening of the day, an uneven date for luck, on which the remains of the "Venerable one," handsomely attired in several new suits of "longevity garments," were placed in the coffin, any one passing by might have heard the loud voices of those who were busily engaged packing the luggage for the long journey to the "Great Beyond"—the "spirit clothes."

"Look, then! Here are your wedded gowns for the winter," one shouted at the top of his voice as though to a deaf person, and the bundle was plumped down inside the coffin with a thud. "There is no need to feel cold." "And here are your summer things! Your fan, your ink slab and pencil, and look you—here in this corner is the money"—and long strings of silver ingots made of bright and shining tin foil were stowed inside the coffin, whilst still the high-pitched tones continued, explaining this, that and the other to the spirit of the dead man, which though apparently afflicted with deafness had preserved, in some mysterious way, the power of sight.

It was late in the evening and dark, but that of course was all in favour of the spirits whose day is our night.

A speedy burial being considered a great mark of disrespect, some months elapsed before the coffin was borne forth to the "city of old age." The lime and the charcoal plentifully strewn within, and in some cases an extra precaution in the form of a cement made of rice, vinegar

and flour, make the occupied coffins, so often met with in a Chinese house, far less insanitary than one would suppose.

It was a cold spring morning; the "sun had not yet opened," as the serving-woman expressed it, when the wailing of mourners, and the squeaking of musical instruments announced that our friend's funeral was about to take place. On and off through the night, the Taoist priests had been hard at work keeping at bay the evil spirits by the beating of gongs and the chanting of prayers. In the road, between the low white houses and the grey river, the coffin was lowered to the ground, whilst the mourners in their sackcloth garments fell on their knees in worship, making "libation of spirits" in honour of the dead, and reading aloud to the soul in attendance, an address, explaining the arrangements that had been made—the position of the tomb, etc.—"like a white cloud, Thou hast passed away to go to the West, and it is in vain we look up to Thee . . . so we have founded a nice city (*i.e.*, grave) of which we venture to tell Thee some particulars," etc., etc., and the blue smoke from the burning incense, and the bonfire of paper in their midst, rose slowly upwards. On the top of the coffin a white cock, with tied feet, crouched miserably. To him, the "emblem of the sun," who by crowing at dawn frightens away the spirits of darkness, was entrusted the carrying of the soul to the grave, and with the sure instinct of the lower creatures, the bird seemed to know that, only by the shedding of its own life's blood could deliverance from this hypothetical burden be achieved, or possibly it may have been rendered drowsy by a dose of

spirits poured down its throat. A handful of grass lay beside the cock. A sod of turf would have signified that for a time at least the coffin must still remain above ground, but this was merely a handful of grass placed there for good luck.

Later in the day a miniature paper mansion six feet by six for the dead man to inhabit in the next world stood by the front door of his former humble dwelling.

To the smallest detail, all was complete, from the handsomely carved bedsteads, the chairs and tables to a grand guest hall furnished in the approved style and the walls adorned by sayings from the classics on coloured scrolls. Over the floor "silver" and "gold" paper money had been scattered lavishly, and pot plants decorated the courts. Above the kitchen stove hung the shrine of the kitchen god, as important a functionary evidently in the land of the dead as in the land of the living.

The whole consignment would be sent down to Hades that night by the fire messengers.

Some cautious souls apparently make preparations beforehand, and a rich old lady, in this same province fearing that her relatives, after her death might seek to avoid expense, took the precaution of sending on ahead her servants, her sedan chairs, her chair bearers, her house and her furniture. The priests attended to the burning of these things which were one and all fearfully and wonderfully made of coloured paper, and saw that all was in order. The far-seeing old lady, however, bethought herself that when in course of time she, too, "returned to the excellent city" (died) she might perchance find that her goods and chattels and even her

tin-foil money had all been appropriated by some one else. To prevent, therefore, a catastrophy of the kind she had a life-sized effigy made to represent herself and sent it off post-haste to look after her netherworld property.

Mr. Tang's aged mother " passed over " not long ago. She still lived in the family mansion at the other end of the city, a house of some pretensions with its lofty rooms dark with handsome woodwork richly carved, and cool paved courts one beyond the other. Ba Giao Si had been to see the old lady, but there was nothing to be done. She lay like a shrunken mummy hardly visible in the windowless bedroom behind the heavy hangings of the bed. To the numerous expectant relatives, full of talk and interest, who gathered round, she seemed a little slow in dying. When the elderly son arrived, he offered a piece of timely advice : " Come now " he said ! " You have lived your life with credit, and had better not try and stay any longer, but go quietly away ! " (" hao hao tib chu ba "), and not long after that she went.

The seventh day after the event, Mr. Tang sallied forth to a feast of " ten tables of wine " to meet all the near relatives, and to shave his head and put on his sackcloth mourning for the first time. " When old folks die, the rest feed high," goes the adage. Every seventh day for forty-nine days there will be still another feast, attended by the chief mourners, who will all be wearing sackcloth garments over their ordinary clothes.

The family is well off, and it may be months, possibly longer, before the funeral takes place out of respect for the departed.

It transpired later on, however (Mr. Tang proffered the

information himself without any feeling of shame) that when the thirtieth day had passed, and the fourth feast was over, they decided to hasten the festivities by deceiving the old mother as to the correct date. They informed "her" officially that she had been dead six weeks instead of five. Spirits, luckily, are easily hoodwinked!

In those cities which have come into contact with Western civilisation, foreignised funeral customs are being adopted, with, however, sundry alterations to suit the Oriental idea of the fitness of things. Thus, a brass band, instead of discoursing appropriate funeral airs, keeps up a lively atmosphere by playing with gusto "Yankee Doodle went to Town" just in front of the coffin.

Carriages and funeral wreaths in profusion are the correct thing nowadays in those few favoured places where such luxuries as carriage roads and florists exist. Dispensing with the white cock, the new idea is to reserve the whole of the first mourning carriage for the use of a large-sized photo of the deceased, which occupies the seat of honour banked up by flowers and wreaths, and as a concession to foreign prejudice the chief mourners when on foot, are protected from the public gaze by a four-sided portable screen made of sheeting.

A Chinese family of high rank, and so much in advance of the times as to wear black instead of white at the funeral, invited us some weeks ago to the funeral feast. It was held at one of the most fashionable restaurants of the city and was in all points a festive event. The excellent dinner, of some eleven courses served in Western style, had been superbly cooked. One found it difficult to realise that, in accordance with funeral customs, it

was a vegetable dinner. The fried soles, the pigeons, the fowl, and so on, might almost have passed for the genuine article, even the bones of the latter had been manufactured.

In the "City of the River Orchid," as in most Chinese cities, suicides are common occurrences. Every few days of late an urgent request has come for some of the foreign teachers' life-saving medicines, for invariably the case is one of poisoning. As often as not the means used is some familiar domestic article within the reach of all. Constantly the cause of the disaster is merely a sudden quarrel between two members of the family, and the fatal act has been committed in the blind rage of the moment or in a spirit of revenge, for as a disembodied spirit one will, so it is thought, be able to pay back old scores with a vengeance.

Whether purposely or by accident the would-be suicide often takes enough to frighten the whole household but not enough to accomplish the desired end. Amongst the "contemptible ones of the inner apartments" the household salt sometimes provides the poison used. In most Chinese homes the store of salt is preserved in a suspended jar, the bottom of which is perforated with holes. In course of time the moisture oozes through the holes and drips into a vessel placed there for the purpose, forming a strong solution of spirits of salt. Face powder, in which one ingredient is lead, is said to be quite as efficacious. Sometimes a gold ring answers the purpose, occasionally a mixture of gamboge, and most frequently perhaps, the deed is done with an overdose of opium.

CHAPTER VII

Presents Wet and Dry

Just now feasting is the order of the day, for this is the winter solstice, a week before Christmas, one of the chief festivals in the ancestral halls all over the country. Though by law the number of these clan buildings is limited according to social position, many a humble family by right of connection with either a scholar or an official, can claim some part or lot with one or another of these ancestral temples. On the register, preserved within the walls, are enrolled the names of the living and the dead, and various particulars with regard to the latter, such as, for instance, the amount of money spent on their funerals, the number and quality of their "longevity clothes," and the description of property left by them for the benefit of the ancestral hall.

All those on the register can claim a share of some kind—the head of the family, the near relations have very naturally a larger share than the rest. To all, however, in course of time comes the privilege, though possibly only once in fifty or sixty years, of "sowing the ancestral fields," which means that though for that year the rent for the same is their's to pay, this is but an insignificant item compared to the value of the harvest. It is seldom indeed that a name is erased from the register, though on occasions when, for instance, a member of the clan arouses the ire of his fellows by

becoming a Christian, or for some other reason, his rights to ancestral property are bitterly opposed. Custom ordains, however, in many parts of the country that a man's name cannot be taken off the books without that of his father or of some other near relative, which arrangement adding, as it does, untold complications usually prevents any interference in the matter.

As regards the Christians, there is certainly something to be said for the rest of the family. They argue that as the deserter from their ranks declines henceforth to subscribe to the feast provided for the spirits of the ancestors, or to join in the worship of the departed, he should be ready to forgo his share of the good things, and this many of them are perfectly willing to do.

The " Ancestral Hall " belonging to the family of one of my pupils lies half-hidden amongst the trees in a sheltered nook at the foot of the hills. As we passed that way one afternoon during the days of the winter feasting we looked in hoping to see something of the festivities.

The pavilion-like building, an especially handsome one, stands at the far end of a spacious court planted with cyprus trees and ornamented with carved stonework. Around the court small ante-rooms and a gatehouse shut in the sacred precincts.

In the hall itself the ceremony for the day was over, but some stately gentlemen in brocaded silk courteously invited us to enter and " look see."

Many dainty dishes of fruits and sweetmeats and food of a more solid nature were spread in symmetrical array on the altar-like table before the central tablets. The weird silence that hung over the scene added to the feeling that an interruption had taken place in the proceedings.

As we surveyed the still untasted eatables, and glanced round inquiringly at the long rows of tablets starred with gilded characters that stood upon their shelves around the walls, we could almost have imagined that they were indeed inhabited by spirits, and that, at the sight of these intruders on their privacy, they had hastily climbed back to their places and were staring down upon us.

"Now ye front us, O spirits, now ye pass us by, ascending and descending unrestricted by conditions of space"—so runs one of the prayers used on these occasions. "Your souls are in heaven, your tablets are in the rear apartment. For myriads of years will your descendants think of you with filial thoughts unwearied." *

At the end of the feasting which continues for several days the food is divided "by order of teeth" (by seniority) and according to the respective rights of all the members of the clan. One wondered if any one would have the temerity to partake of the fish (five days old at the lowest computation), a handsome dish of which had formed a *pièce de résistance* on the altar table.

Much, however, might be said in favour of the ancestral hall system, apart from the idolatrous rites. Many an unlucky family has been saved from penury by those at the head of the clan who were able to divert in their favour financial help for the ancestral property.

There are people in the "City of the River Orchid" who expect great things of the Republic. As one worthy farmer maintained in the early days of the new era, five evils would without doubt be abolished—the binding of the feet—the consumption of the black smoke (opium)—sticking in silver and carrying gold, *i.e.*, the wearing of

* Prayer used on certain occasions of ancestral worship.

jewellery—the smoking of foreign tobacco (cigarettes), and, lastly, the worship of idols.

As regards the binding of the feet, however, there still remains a strong feeling, at all events in the lower and the middle classes, that in order to compete successfully in the matrimonial market, bound feet are as necessary as ever *unless* a greater attraction can be offered in the shape of a modern education. For some years now girls with bound feet have been excluded from all Government schools, and in mission schools, where the educational advantages offered are often of a higher calibre than those in Government institutions, bound feet have always been condemned, though not in all cases absolutely forbidden.

Thus it comes about that in some families one girl "reads books" (goes to school) and keeps her natural feet, whereas the sister, or embryo sister-in-law as the case may be, stays at home to be fitted for matrimony in the other and cheaper way.

One could not but wonder how the idea arose that the wearing of jewellery and smoking of cigarettes would cease after the birth of the "People's Kingdom." As a "maid looks to the hand of her mistress" so new China looks at the ways of America and would gladly adopt them as her own.

Therefore, gilded youths, like my "brocaded" pupil, Mr. Wang, and others of his ilk are wearing rings of accentuated foreign pattern, and, despite the fact that they are the happy possessors of absolutely undecayed teeth, white and even, they have been so attracted by the beauty (?) of the gold crowns in a well-preserved American mouth that they have purchased from the

local dentist, a man trained in an American school, gold sheaths which on gala occasions are worn as movable ornaments on the most prominent of their front teeth! Such, alas, is the blind imitation of Western ways in these days of transition. As to cigarettes, have they not come in the first place from America itself? They have spread from town to town, from province to province, like a plague of locusts. In distant inland cities, on picturesque pagodas and city walls one comes across the crudely coloured picture advertisements of the Cigarette Company, the one jarring touch in a scene that would gladden the soul of an artist.

So great is the sale of this "rolled up tobacco grass" that fabulous wealth is ascribed to the promoters of the company, and slowly but surely the old water pipe, said to be the least injurious form of smoking in existence, is being superseded.

As to the idols—many have had to go to the wall to make way either for soldiers or for scholars. Here and there temples have been turned into barracks or into schools. One sign of the times, more significant than the destruction of idols, lies in the fact that temple buildings, transformed into educational establishments have been opened out and lit up on every side by large "foreign" windows in happy disregard of the evil influences which, up till now, it has been considered necessary to exclude by thick walls on all sides, except that of the lucky south.

In some of the temporary barracks, soldiers and idols have occupied the floor space together; in others, a clean sweep has been made of the whole gilded assembly, but this by no means argued that the people have ceased to believe in their efficacy. Many, acknowledging the

necessity of both schools and barracks would probably have answered in the words of an Emperor of the tenth century who, at a critical period when copper money had become exceedingly scarce, gave orders that all copper idols should be melted down for use in the mint, for, "the gods" said His Majesty, "have the good of mankind at heart, and will be quite willing to sacrifice their images in the service of the people!"

One change, however, inaugurated by the Republic, has found little favour in the eyes of the residents of inland cities. The old calendar, by which all things have been regulated from time immemorial, has been officially abolished, and the Western calendar introduced in its place.

The farmers and the country people set their faces against the alteration from the first. "We should have only ten months in which to plough our fields," said one.

"And how," asked another, "should we be able to tell the date of the tidal wave." *

"Besides," they argued, "if we adopt the 'Yang Li' (the sun calendar) New Year's Day will be on the twenty-third of the eleventh moon—we shall lose more than two months' interest on the money that has been lent. Thus the tradesmen agreed, that to make up the year's accounts in the eleventh moon, would be a most irregular proceeding, fraught with financial loss. In the "City of the River Orchid," however, they were perfectly willing to fall in with the suggestions, in theory at all events, that the day should be observed as a public holiday. In any case, all Government offices, schools, post offices,

* The famous Hangchow "Bore," which, however, subsides long before the "City of the River Orchid" is reached.

etc., were closed, and here and there some son of new China donned his "ceremony clothes," and went round to call on his friends in honour of the event, though, when it came to the point, all the shops remained open, being reluctant to lose a chance of trade with the one holiday of the year not much more than a month ahead.

It was without doubt a curious fact, as one remarked to the other, that this change to the "sun calendar" had considerably affected the weather. A snowstorm which was a not infrequent event on the eve of the Chinese New Year, according to the old reckoning, had arrived contrary to all precedent nearly six weeks too soon on the eve of the "foreign" New Year. No wonder the farmers shook their heads, and complained that if they were foolhardy enough to adopt the "sun calendar" they would never know when to sow their crops. It was to be hoped that the fortnightly periods known as "grain rains," "excited insects," and so forth, would not arrive prematurely even as the snow had done.

New Year's Day (moon calendar) would fall this year on February 6th, and the citizens and country people set themselves with greater fervour than ever to prepare for the time-honoured festivity. Along the already crowded streets, new stalls, like monster fungi, cropped up in profusion, selling for the most part, scrolls of thin and brightly-coloured paper, inscribed with classical sayings, to be pasted anon on the doors of houses, and on the wooden pillars of guest halls. There are white ones, and blue ones for families in mourning, brick-dust red and crimson ones for those who are not. The orange stalls are offering grotesque masks for sale, and queer erections, like small carpet looms, are put up on waste bits of ground, the

white threads, some eight feet or so in length, are not woollen threads after all but strips of *mien*, a kind of macaroni, which being symbolic of long life, are made in especially long lengths for the auspicious occasion. The caterers for the dead are doing a thriving trade. The coffin makers seem perpetually at work, and the shops in which are displayed the paper houses and furniture for the next world have a goodly store of articles on view. For days beforehand one meets rich and poor coming back across the fields from their marketing in the city. The poor man's basket is a pathetic sight—the small sum has been so carefully laid out to the best advantage in a packet or two of " little heart " (confectionery), a tiny jar of oil, a small pot of wine, a few red candles, a string or two of tinfoil money for the ancestors, and lastly, a very minute piece of pork (which is extremely dear just now, as all the pigs were killed in a hurry during the Revolution). As to the " spirit money " it cost but a few copper cash to buy, but in the next world will be worth to the dear departed, at least twenty dollars.

The twelfth moon—in other words the month of January—brings with it this year a new distraction. Every day through one busy week fresh relays of the learned and the wealthy, from other parts of the province, appear on the scenes, and as the newspapers phrase it—" For the first time 400,000,000 people in China are interested in the same thing," but they are mistaken. In the " City of the River Orchid," as in many other places, the new parliamentary elections arouse so little enthusiasm that the man in the street, when asked why so many well-to-do strangers are staying in the city, can suggest no reason. The payment of two dollars a year

in taxes gives the right to a vote, and the liberty, apparently, to sell one's vote to the highest bidder. Too much buying and selling is dangerous, for in a record given of a district up north the head man of a township persuaded his friends, not only to vote four or five times over in his favour, but to purchase some ten or fifteen votes apiece for his benefit. This was somewhat too bold a step, and the judge called in the police. An elderly politician, a well-read man, who took a more intelligent interest in the affairs of the world than most of his ilk, was asked if a member of the provincial assembly could also be elected to the Peking Parliament. The reply was characteristic of his race :—" Can a monkey," he asked, " wear two hats ? "

My pupils, Wang and his cousin, had had no time this month for the English lessons, being busy " collecting their debts." Almost every Chinese is, to a greater or less degree, both a borrower and a money-lender.

" A good borrower will have much wealth, while the self-user will be reduced," say the Chinese, and they also maintain that " If the pence do not go, the pounds will not come," and that " Money (not charity) covers a multitude of sins."

The trading instinct is so strong, even amongst small boys, that they will lend out their cash at interest and, failing cash, any extra food that can be spared.

The " Third Precious," an adopted waif who lives on the premises, a phlegmatic morsel of some five summers, little more than a baby, whose cheeks grow fatter every day to the impoverishment of his eyes and, who seldom speaks above a whisper, and that only under persuasion,

was discovered the other day to have bartered a portion of his Christmas presents, the first he had ever been known to possess, for the fortieth part of a penny per piece. Doubtless he has inherited the trading instinct from his mother who, owing to the death of her husband, was glad not only to hand over the " Third Precious " to the teacher sisters, but to make money by the sale of her last baby. She had, moreover, adroitly persuaded the purchaser thereof to loan the child back to her at so much a month for its keep.

At the New Year, sticky rice dumplings are in vogue—called Nien Gao. By a play on the Chinese words, the name is held to mean that he who partakes of this appetising dish will be " annually elevated " (rise in the world).

Another New Year's speciality are miniature " wedding cakes " sprinkled with red powder and black dates. As the Chinese say—" The stomach loves surprises "—and on inspection the dainty cake turns out to be a weird mixture of fat pork and sugar plums. The same red paper, something like blotting paper in consistency, used by cooks for colouring confectionery, is also much in request by the ladies of the inner apartments as a cosmetic.

Long before the actual day, New Year's gifts are exchanged or refused. Ba Giao Si, being a person of some importance in the city, and filling, moreover, the position of the head of the household, is the recipient of a constant stream of presents. Morning, noon and eve bring their share—packets of sugar, packets of sweetmeats all wrapped in the orthodox red striped paper, baskets of fruit and nuts, baskets of chickens, baskets of eggs. In

the end over a thousand eggs were received, and as to the chickens, the little poultry yard was nearly as tightly packed with victims as a Chinese prison. But in China things are not what they seem, not that one would suggest anything fraudulent about the chickens, or even about the eggs, but custom ordains that to him who gives shall be given, and a basket must never be returned empty. A convenient plan therefore obtains of taking A.'s present or part of it and handing it, unknown of course to A., to E. or F., and of using the gifts presented by E. and F. for B. and C. Fortunately eggs and sugar tell no tales. When all exchanges have been made, and one reckons up one's financial position, it stands probably very much as it did, but it is more than likely that one has increased somewhat in wisdom, and one realises now that F. wishes to be friendly again after the estrangement of a few years ago, that Mrs. W. would like you to do her a favour, and that G.'s second wife's niece's husband wishes you well, whereas you had fancied that he was on the side of the opposition. As to the Mrs. W. who is currying favour, her case is usually weighed and found wanting. A message is sent down, therefore, saying that Chinese sweetmeats are very good, but we are not eating them to-day. She will understand perfectly and take back her rejected present with smiles. Cakes, sweetmeats, etc., are all *wet gifts*. There are the *dry gifts* to be considered as well, which take the form of " hard cash " —a hundred copper coins strung on a red cord is presented to every child in Ba Giao Si's household. A dry gift in return is necessary, and this should exceed the first in value on the Chinese principle that " One presents a quince in the hope of receiving a gem."

My pupils, Wang and his cousin, sent a more dainty gift of orange trees and flowering shrubs in pots. This meant, of course, " golden sand " (a tip) to the servant in charge, and a return offering later in the day, which with some diffidence on my part, took the form of silk pocket handkerchiefs, and the *unexpressed* hope that I might see them again some day, not as a rejected gift, but in the ordinary course of events. Alas, however, at the end of the New Year's holiday when Wang reappeared with a smile and a piece of cotton wool as a nasal appendix, I was forced to conclude that my well-intentioned present had not fulfilled its destiny.

Some days before the first of the New Year (old style) the neighbours, up and down the street, were busy speeding the kitchen god upon his heavenly way. Before our gates a bonfire was burning brightly, poked attentively from time to time by the master of the house and his little wife. The god, flying upwards in the sparks, had already " gone to heaven," they said (" shang tien "), and we were just too late to see him start. In the next house, however, we had better luck, " the venerable one of the stove " had not yet left, and they promised to send word so that we might speed the parting guest. Half an hour later, the good lady of the house arrived with her red and yellow lantern bobbing at the end of a stick, to escort us in person. Hers was a house of some wealth, and a goodly feast of dainty dishes, preserved fruits and sugar plums, was spread upon the kitchen table under the shrine, so that the god might take his fill of sweetmeats before ascending to the skies, and carry with him pleasant memories, which it was hoped would induce him to give a good report of the family to the powers that be.

Three tiny cups of tea stood side by side—one for himself, one for his father, one for his wife, and a bamboo lamp-stand, something like a miniature chair, was draped with mottoes on red paper for the " venerable one " to sit on when starting on his journey.

" He goes to Heaven to report favourable things !
He comes down to earth to protect and give peace ! "

so ran the words of the mottoes. We sat in the guest hall to see him pass. The master of the house bore the hero of the evening rapidly through the room, bore him somewhat shamefacedly we fancied, and seemed reluctant to let us see his treasure at close quarters, a poor thing enough as regarded his outward appearance, merely a bit of painted paper about a foot long cut in the shape of a manikin, and " seated " on the bamboo erection.

A bundle of shavings, set on fire outside the front entrance, soon accelerated his departure, while the master of the house bowed low to his fleeting spirit, bowed to heaven and to earth, and again, and yet again to the yellow flames, whilst a volley of fire crackers announced the departure of the god. There is a quaintly worded prayer used on these occasions in which the petitioners confess that " it is possible that both old and young have transgressed in innumerable ways as we have passed in and out of this kitchen ; through lack of proper attention and dress we, too, may have given offence to you, or insulted the spirits of heaven and earth "—and so forth.

Five days later the shrine will again be occupied, and in the words of the prayer, by the god's " endless goodness

and exhaustless favour," the family will, they hope, " be enabled to continue " through the year.

On " New Year's Day " hard-boiled eggs in generous quantities, unlimited tea, melon seeds, monkey nuts and all kinds of confectionery were spread out on the guest-hall table in tempting array, to be replenished throughout the day as fresh relays of visitors arrived. One or two had paid their duty calls already on January 1st. Others had decided that the custom was now obsolete and might be discarded together with the queue and the classics, and a select few, amongst those who came, showed that they, too, had been influenced by the new era by bringing their wives with them and sitting down side by side to the hard-boiled eggs and the tea. The duty of a wife, says an old Chinese writer, " is to serve at table and stand by in silence to fill and light her husband's pipe "—she herself must eat alone in a corner. But times have changed !

On New Year's Eve one could almost have imagined oneself to be in the midst of a raging battle, so incessant and so deafening was the explosion of fire crackers all round our walls, but on the morning of the eventful day a silence as of death reigned throughout the busiest streets of that busy town. On each threshold tiny red spots flecked the ground, reminding one of an historical scene years ago in the land of the Egyptians, but no avenging angel had passed that way—the red stains were but the remains of the fire crackers—bits of red paper and crumpled incense sticks of last night's fiery salutation to the gods.

Last night, and well through the night, much feasting had taken place and now, for the most part, the revellers were slumbering heavily. Here and there the " very

houses seemed asleep." For the only occasion throughout the year the street pavement was dry and comparatively clean, for this is the one and only day in which the water carriers carry no water, the sewage carriers, no sewage, when, in fact, no work is done of any sort or description. There is moreover a general belief, even in these modern times, that whatever one happens to do on New Year's Day, one will continue to do throughout the coming year. Small wonder then that the performers of menial duties, anxious for a rise in the world should especially seek to escape from the "trivial round and common task." Care must be exercised in other directions as well, and many a respectable citizen believes that it will assuredly be a sign of ill luck if the first person he happens to meet that morning be a woman. He is well aware also that unpropitious words such as "death" or "devil" must be avoided.

The narrow alley ways, usually crowded with life and colour, are swept and garnished—garnished with wooden shutters, a long double row of them, shutting one in on either side like an interminable series of coach-house doors, and decorated by the red paper scrolls with appropriate mottoes. As the day drew on, people in holiday attire, men and boys for the most part, emerged for a gentle stroll along the empty streets. There were signs of an awakening populace and sounds of mirth issued from behind closed doors—discordant sounds, the wild beating of gongs, the banging of tea trays, the clash of symbols and twanging of wheezy-stringed instruments, so deafening and uproarious was the so-called music that one could almost imagine that every member of the family had seized on the culinary utensils of the house

and turned them *pro tem* into " musical " instruments. " For improving manners and customs there is nothing like music," said the ancients, and we hear of a disciple of Confucius who " ruled his district in peace by playing the guitar." Surely things have changed since those good old days !

CHAPTER VIII

Flower Lamps and Learning Halls.

The 15th of the first moon, the last day of the New Year's holidays, is to be celebrated as usual by the Festival of Lanterns. This, in spite of the fact that "New China" condemns these foolish customs. There has been no official procession to the fields this spring to bless the future crops, no painted cow of clay to show by the colours with which it is adorned, what the weather will be like during the coming year. Twelve months ago in the first flush of enthusiasm at the birth of the "People's Kingdom" the gods were forgotten, and no one heeded the musty, tarnished idols which were associated half-unconsciously perhaps with the "Manchu Usurpers." A "People's Kingdom" would be an Elysium in which all men would be equal and each a little king on his own account. Henceforth, traders would pay no "lekin," farmers would pay no land tax, "Worms of the Kingdom" (rapacious officials) would no longer exist, peace and prosperity would reign throughout the land! In Sun Yat Sen's own words—"Inglorious bondage had been transformed to an inspiring freedom, splendid with the illustrious light of opportunity." But this year, the second year of the New Republic, there were not a few who sighed for the old *régime*. In these days, they said, one never knew what was going to happen next. These young officials with Western education, "imitation

foreigners" as they were called, were an uncertain quantity, and though they had studied Western science, they had forgotten the "book of rites," and manners, which, after all, are "the shadows of virtues," were conspicuously lacking. As to some of the new military officials, the great "Tiger Hsu" and others, it was said that they could neither read nor write. Property had become less secure, living more expensive, and some of these new-fangled ideas were ridiculous. As to those queer foreign clothes, they lacked comfort, being cold in winter, hot in summer, and too tight altogether to enable one to "catch the fleas."

Thus in the "City of the River Orchid," as in many other places, the dragon came to his own again, and on the 15th of the first moon great were the celebrations in his honour. From the upper windows of the house behind the banana trees we sat, as it were, in the dress circle in full view of the stage, or more correctly speaking, of the open country on the opposite shore. From across the water came the hum of many thousands of voices like the distant whirr of machinery—the orange and crimson-coloured lanterns—flower lamps as the Chinese call them, of the people coming and going, rose and sank like monster fireflies, and here and there, reflected in the black water, they shone like ladders of golden steps. Rockets swished overhead, crackers snapped and banged announcing the approach of the dragon. It came at last, a fiery serpent nearly the third of a mile in length! Head, body and tail of lighted lanterns, curling round the hillside, it "crawled" swiftly along the shore, its image reflected in the water in a wriggling stream of gold. The beating of gongs, the firing of crackers, the shouting of many voices filled the air.

Truly the gods were pleased! There was no burst of rain to extinguish the lights and mar the beauty of the lanterns, as had been the case so often of late years. The fire-dragon swept along the shore in undisturbed splendour, when suddenly it swayed, hesitating in its triumphal progress. The whole river side was a blaze of light, and white flames sprang up from the red glow of the paper lanterns. Was the monster being consumed by its own fire? Not so, for in another moment it swept back, tail first this time, and swinging forward whirled in a circle of light round and round in a weird dance of ecstasy—a fire dragon nearly the third of a mile in length! Till at last, all energy spent, it slowly uncoiled and slipped round the hillside out of sight. "The gods were pleased!" And a few days later, on an evening approved of by the astrologers, a rival dragon appeared before the city walls. It went on its way with many halts in compliance with the unwritten law that wherever crackers are fired off in its honour, the dragon shall pause in acknowledgment. The "creature" being this time within arm's length, we were able to observe its anatomy and the ingenious method by which the green and scaly paper body, lit from within by candles, was supported on slender planks, connected one with the other by a rough hinge which gives elasticity to the whole, and borne on the shoulders of men who, walking in the shadow under the planks, were fairly inconspicuous except at close quarters. On the head of the dragon a paper boat, in itself a monster lantern, was occupied by a crew of manikins, each made of coloured paper lit from within. Clocks, books, fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish, all in the form of elegant lanterns, varied the monotony.

A night or two ago an encounter with another kind of dragon—the "fire dragon" caused great commotion along the river front. We saw the weird light in the sky, and people running. "It is within the city walls," they cried. So closely packed were the houses, and so inflammable was much of the material with which they were built that a fire inside the city walls was likely to assume dangerous proportions. We joined the hurrying throng as with loud shouts and yells, the custodians of the peace, or rather the disturbers of the peace, ran past. Their lanterns, red and yellow, bobbed up and down above the heads of the crowd as they rushed by, and behind them, men carrying buckets pushed their way through, but water from half a dozen buckets or so would be mere thimblefuls in the midst of the column of flames bursting through the roof of a substantial white building ahead of us. Every minute or so a thud of some heavy weight falling, sounded ominous, but it was nothing, nothing but enormous bundles of cotton wool, some six feet in length, which the frightened owners were flinging over the city wall for safety. Whether owing to the presence of the buckets or the absence of the cotton wool there was no telling, but by the time the "water dragon" (fire engine) had been brought from the city temple with much beating of gongs and clamour of voices, the fire had practically subsided. Only the one house was destroyed, whilst the buildings wedged tightly in on either side had strangely enough escaped, but those who knew the circumstances declared that this was not strange at all. A revengeful mother-in-law was to blame in the matter. Being wildly indignant with her son for bestowing too much affection on the "inner person" (his wife) she had constructed a

straw man—a god of revenge—and day by day had worshipped before it, burning candles and incense, and praying that by his help, evil might overtake her unfilial offspring. Her prayers had been answered with undoubted vigour, but in a way she had not anticipated. The son and his wife happened to be in the country paying a New Year's visit to relations. It was considered a significant fact that the brunt of the misfortune fell on the old lady herself. She was at the other end of the city looking on at a "flower lamp procession" when the fire broke out, started, so it was said, by a candle that had been left alight in front of the "god of revenge," and when she finally returned home it was to find the house in ashes and all her possessions gone. Moreover, the neighbours' doors were inhospitably closed against her in self-defence, it being considered a sure invitation to disaster to invite people into your house who have been burnt out of their own.

At this festive season, acrobatic mice, conjurers and Punch and Judy shows appear on the scenes. In China, Punch and Judy shows are on their native soil. Since the days of the ancients, some 800 years or more B.C., marionettes have been in existence in the land of the Celestials, and according to the annals of history, they have sometimes been put to strange uses.

The story goes that the Huns, under a certain famous general, were advancing on the imperial city (200 B.C.) when a bright idea occurred to one of the palace officials. Before long he had lined the city walls with life-sized marionnettes skilfully constructed to represent maidens of great beauty. The strategy proved successful, for the Hun chieftain had with him, as probably the astute

official was well aware, an exceedingly jealous wife, who seeing, as she fancied, so many beautiful young ladies looking down upon them from the walls, persuaded her lord and master to leave the city in peace!

Chen Ping, though now promoted to be the Punch and Judy god, began life, say some, as this same wily official, who, by his wooden figures, preserved the imperial city from attack.

In the Chinese Punch and Judy show there is a motley company of *dramatis personæ*, including an enormous goose, a miniature donkey, a large tortoise, a tiny monkey, a black devil, a Buddhist priest, and half a dozen policemen. The sleight of hand by which the puppets are worked is exceedingly clever. The Judies, of whom there are two, appear as interested spectators, by the side wings of the tiny stage, watching the entries of their weird companions, whose tendencies, like those of their Western descendants, are of a distinctly pugilistic nature. At the end of the performance they, the tiny Judies, waltz round in placid satisfaction, and as they dance their eyelids blink up and down winking familiarly at the audience. The little stage and stand are in all essentials counterparts of those in Western lands, but with true Oriental inconsistency little or no attempt is made to hide the legs of the manipulator. Such irrelevant details are "buh yao gin" (of no importance). On a Chinese stage no one objects to the presence of street urchins, who climb up in front so as to get a better view.

The Chinese, as a race, have great histrionic talents, fostered doubtless by the exigencies of their daily life, which so often lead them to pretend to be what they are not. For nearly two hundred years women have been

debarred from the stage by law, but in the " People's Kingdom " the old prohibition no longer holds good, and in the early days of the Republic some Cantonese ladies took part in public theatricals in order to collect funds for the Chinese army in Mongolia ! To buy girls in order to train them as actresses is becoming a new source of income for the unscrupulous.

" If a girl does no harm, it is enough, you cannot expect her to be either good or useful," so said a Chinese writer of bygone days.

" Can you teach an intelligent horse to read and write, well then, if you cannot teach an intelligent horse, what can you expect to do with a woman," said another of these ancient pessimists.

In their hearts they knew better, but the policy of inaction commended itself to all. It was, no doubt, the safer course to pursue. As the Chinese proverb runs— " A man knows, but a woman knows better." There was no telling what might happen if girls were allowed the same educational advantages as their brothers, and it was shrewdly suspected that they might, if given the chance, prove the apter scholars of the two and become insubordinate in the home. Was there not a warning in the classics to the effect that " daughters who are permitted to please themselves will grow proud and lazy and able to speak sharply," and girls in these days are exceedingly anxious to go to the " Hall of Instruction " and " read books."

It is more than half a century now since the first girls' school was opened in China, but in spite of the fact that pupils were paid to attend, the school was not popular,

and the only children obtainable were either those of the very poor, or unwanted waifs.

By slow degrees, however, educational establishments for girls increased in quantity and quality, yet, even so, an authority in these matters maintained that a very few years ago but one woman in three thousand was able to read. Until 1898 the schools were invariably connected with Missions, but in that year some Chinese officials and merchants started one on their own account in Shanghai, for, they maintained, " to open up the intelligence of the country, we must certainly make the women free." Before long the school was suppressed by order of the Dowager Empress who, however, a few years later changed front, and became, nominally at least, a " warm patron of woman's education." In these days Government schools for girls are to be found in nearly all the big cities. " The most important thing in China just now is that women be educated," said Yuan Shi Kai shortly before his retirement after the " Old Buddha's " death, and in many places there are spacious school buildings with the gilded characters over the door : " Female Learning Hall " even if there be no actual school within its walls.

The buildings are significant of the new era, with their large glass windows (letting in plenty of light and air, regardless of demons), their seats and desks, their maps, their anatomical plates, and natural history pictures upon the walls, and finally the " wind lute " (harmonium), without which no well-regulated modern school in China is complete. But, alas ! Only a few hold their heads well above water ; some are closed for lack of teachers, some for lack of funds, and others are sinking so rapidly in the

estimation of the people that before long they will go under altogether.

A little knowledge—Western knowledge—may be a "dangerous thing," but in China in these days of transition, it is a certain source of income. A few lessons in English, a smattering of arithmetic and geography will help to secure a lucrative berth, and the other day a girl, whose sole qualification for the post was that she had sung in the choir at a mission church, was engaged as music teacher in the Government school!

The Chinese girl, however, who is considered thoroughly well educated, graduates at one of the Chinese-American seminaries which, thanks to American missions, have been established in some of the most important cities. If a promising pupil, she will probably join the select few who cross the seas to continue their education in American colleges, and who, before now, although handicapped by a language that is not their own, have astonished their fellow graduates by winning the prizes and taking the honours to which they themselves have aspired. Here and there the mission schools have produced still another type of woman of whom any country might be proud:

> "The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength and skill,"

and while a modern education, hand in hand with Christianity, has aroused her slumbering imagination, and fostered in her the power of sympathy, she has not lost the gentle caressing manner and quiet dignity of other days.

Some, however, who prefer quick methods and showy

accomplishments soon leave the mission school to be "finished" in Japan, where complete courses of educational treatment, cheap and otherwise, long or short, are "in the market" to suit the time and the purse of all who come.

This quick-witted, superficially educated young woman becomes, as a rule, a very self-confident member of society on her return home, proud of her accomplishments, her superior knowledge, and full of destructive ideas.

The "Kingdom of the Home" savours too much, she fancies, of the limitations of other days. She not only sighs for, but seeks and finds "fresh fields and pastures new."

One has met her in male uniform with her hair cut short, enlisting in the Amazon corps to fight for her country. One has come across her as a Red Cross nurse, all alone, except for a girl companion, in a house full of soldiers; one has heard of her attacking the assembly hall in Nanking as a suffragette, or figuring as a member of a band of girl detectives lately enrolled by the Government. When she marries she tries to adopt the "American" style as she calls it, and makes the first advances, or she resorts to matrimonial advertisements like a girl student of Wuchang, who the other day solicited offers of marriage in a local paper: "My unhappy destiny," she wrote, "has led me to incite my parents' displeasure, and to travel far to another place, for my life must be one of liberty. Should any gentleman desire to marry me it is necessary that he should accompany his offer with his photo and visiting card, stating his business and place of residence. Next Sunday I shall examine the

scholarships of all who apply, and when the engagement has been settled I shall, in order to authenticate the matter, publish the name and business and address of the gentleman in the newspaper. . . ." As an afterthought she added: "Any one over twenty years of age whose social rank is unsuitable will kindly refrain from calling!"

If reports be true this is by no means an isolated instance, but as goes without saying, this unrestrained spirit of liberty has made sad havoc of these unconventional marriages before many months were over. O ye shades of Confucius where are now the four virtues and the three obediences of your "mindless, soulless creature," the modesty, docility, careful speech, and submissive demeanour which were once considered the whole duty of woman?

Occasionally, the modern young lady finds herself bound according to law by an engagement made for her when she was not long out of the cradle. In these days of freedom (judging by a case which was tried in the local courts a few months back), escape is easy.

The girl appeared on the scenes with the man whom she wished to marry, and the man who wished to marry her, and to whom, moreover, she was legally bound.

"I want liberty," she said.

"Do you desire this woman?" asked the judge of the would-be bridegroom. He assented.

"But does she not belong to the other man?"

"China is now a Republic," came the answer, "and we are free to act as we will!"

"What have you to say?" the judge continued, addressing the rival.

"The girl belongs to our family. We have given money for her!" he replied.

"I will soon settle that question," replied the judge, and turning to the girl's lover he said, "Give this man some money and the girl is yours!"

A few dollars were handed over, and the case closed amidst *general* satisfaction!

If there is ground for the complaint in Western lands that the schoolmaster teaches for school rather than for life, how much more might this be said in China. The marvel is that Chinese boys turn out as well as they do. One realises that with such good material to work upon what splendid results might be achieved with proper training and advantages. In a Chinese home, as a general rule, the boys follow their own inclinations. One inquires why a sick child does not take his medicine, why a lazy child does not learn his lessons, why a tired child does not go to bed, and the answer is always the same—"Ta buh ken" (he is not willing), and there is an end of it. The elders sigh or smile according to their temperament. They ignore their own responsibility, and the fact that they might, if they wished, alter things to suit their own convenience.

Later on, when it becomes a question of school, the little sons conform to custom with surprising adaptability, and the time-honoured saying—"Secure an education and become an official" throws a glamour over the "Hall of Instruction."

Who in China would "plough with a pen," or in other words, be a schoolmaster?

Across the lane at the back of our house old Li Sien Seng sits through the day in the midst of a chorus of some

thirty voices mumbling, chanting, and yelling from a varied assortment of lesson books. The great point to be observed is noise. Concentration of thought is not required or indeed expected. On occasions each pupil tries to chant louder than his neighbour, or to shriek in a high treble whilst others take the bass.

Unless they learn aloud, they cannot learn at all, they tell us. Besides which, the teacher maintains that there is no middle course, and unless his pupils " give tongue," so to speak, they will either sit in idleness or " play the monkey."

Small wonder that so many adults, who profess to " recognise character " (read), can sing through one page of literature after another with only the most rudimentary conception of its meaning. " If you do not repeat your task for three days, brambles will grow in your mouth," goes the saying. Surely the empty forms and symbols, which play so large a part in the lives of the Sons of Han, are fostered by these parrot-like recitations which, in many cases, have constituted the only education of their early days.

A new word signifying to " educate " rather than to " instruct " has been coined with many others to supply the modern requirements of these enlightened days. Western pedagogic methods are gaining ground, and most of the new books deal with Western subjects. Arithmetic, geography, elementary science, and so forth are (in Chinese phraseology) stored away in the pupil's abdomen, and the pendulum has swung so far in the other direction that the old classics, the Confucian analects, the Doctrine of the Mean, the works of Mencius are ignored by all but the few.

CHAPTER IX

Fragrant Dust and the Precious Ones

As young Wang with his pearl rings and his satchel came to the English class this morning, he was accosted by the somewhat discouraging remark: "You are looking very ugly to-day" (viz., you are not looking at all well, but in Chinese the one word contains both meanings). His appearance is certainly somewhat sickly, especially when combined with this habit of his of emitting a prolonged yawn every few minutes. He goes to bed early, he tells us, and gets up late. The Chinese have a saying that "too much sleep brings sickness." Young Wang's life, as indeed the lives of so many "gilded youths" in China, is singularly sedentary.

Few take any exercise of any kind, except, perhaps, a dilatory stroll through the streets. There seems indeed to be no attractive form of exercise to take. By old-fashioned folk, games are not encouraged. "There is no profit in play," goes the approved saying. They have indeed heard of tennis and cricket. Lu has even seen them played in "the hub of the universe," Shanghai, and describes them to the others, who smile pityingly. They know that these fatiguing occupations are in vogue in some of the Western schools and colleges, but they can see no amusement in either except possibly to the spectators.

In the books of the ancients it is recorded that football was once played in China, first of all with a ball stuffed

with hair, later on with an inflated bladder covered with leather ; the goal resembled a triumphal arch in shape, but the game could hardly have been a matter of pure recreation, as it is written that though the victors were rewarded with flowers and fruit, and sometimes silver bowls and brocades, " the captain of the losing team was flogged." *

In those " good old days " one hears of polo as a game played before the Emperor, in which even women were sometimes allowed to take part, but only at a distinct disadvantage, being mounted, so it is said, on donkeys.

" What do you do all day ? " I inquired of Lu and Wang on one of the many occasions, when they professed to have had no time to prepare their translation work.

Lu proffered the explanation in English that they were busy because " their friends were too many," and Wang handed me a slip of paper on which were inscribed four Chinese characters : " books, drawing, music, chess," but a direct answer as to whether he himself dabbled in the four polite arts was not forthcoming. At the end of my inquiries, I was as much in the dark as ever as to my pupils' means of recreation. Direct answers, whether in matters trivial or otherwise, are contrary to the custom of the country. Thus one small boy of the household when asked why he is beginning to undress so early explains that he " is trying not to sleep slowly," in other words " get to bed quickly," and the servant who has hastily removed a pan of hot charcoal says in answer to inquiries, *not* that the woodwork was catching fire as this would be the surest way to bring about disaster, but that " he feared there might be some affair."

* " Civilisation of China," H. A. Giles.

At certain holiday seasons theatricals in the court-yards of the temples, and at various stately buildings belonging to provincial guilds, form a diversion to the daily monotony of the life of the pleasure-seeker. To one of those jollifications two miles from the city, Wang and Lu were carried in their sedan chairs. To ride on horse-back would have been too much trouble, and to walk, an unnecessary exertion, when coolies could be hired to carry one. It would have done young Wang good to have adopted the ingenious plan of a famous Chinese statesman in the fourth century who, wishing to inure himself to hardness, and to exercise his muscles without losing a moment of his valuable time, carried with him a hundred bricks on his daily walk to and from his private apartments to the Courts of Justice.

Amongst the fashionable youth of the city, printed cards in foreign style are gradually superseding the red sheets of paper used as visiting cards in former days. Lu and Wang and their friends, following the craze of the moment, desire not only foreign cards but foreign names. A certain Mr. Uin Fan applied to us through a mutual acquaintance for assistance in the matter. Why not keep his own name we suggested, following the example of Yuan Shi Kai and other great men, but no, though unable to speak a word of the language, he desired an English name. Would a translation of his Chinese name suit his fancy ? Mr. Flowery Cloud, for instance. No, nothing would content him but the real thing, so finally Uin Fan became " Ian Fane " and all was peace.

Lu and Wang, I am glad to say, remained Lu and Wang till the end of the chapter, and satisfied their idea of the fitness of things by letting their first names be

represented by initials, whilst Lu, as a finishing touch, had his photo printed on the back of his card! Other Western customs are gaining ground, and Lu and Wang have discarded their rag and cloth shoes for creaking leather boots. The creak, alas! is by no means a point of objection, for does it not proclaim to the world at large the interesting fact that the boots are not only foreign but *new?*

Now and again Wang, who is, I am told, the owner of beautiful terraced gardens, brings me an offering of flowers. "We are so fond of flowers," say the Chinese, "that a single spray is considered sufficient for a bouquet, and a bouquet is thought to be vulgar."

In the winter the offering would take the form of a tiny branch of the *Lah mei Hwa*, with blossoms like yellow stars on a leafless bough which blooms in mid-winter and is of rare fragrance.

In the early spring and later on, magenta-coloured peonies were the usual gift. Peonies are, of all flowers, one of the most prized in a Chinese garden; it is said that there are 240 different species of them in the land. The "king of flowers," it is called, and is said to be the emblem of wealth, and much care is taken over the cultivation of the plant. All who can do so, feed it with fishbones and sprinkle the soil with fish-water. Just before the flowers come into bloom those, who are punctilious in these matters, will even go so far as to worship this symbol of wealth by the burning of sticks of incense placed around the sacred roots.

A famous Chinese gardener of past days, when asked the secret of his success, said that all he did was to "study the individual character of the plant and treat it accord-

ingly." One wondered if the inquirer felt much enlightened. The Chinese love of flowers and skill in their management is well-known; and the little secluded garden shut in by high walls, is a spot much beloved of its owner, who, however, would be horrified at the thought of working in it himself.

"If a home has not a garden and an old tree, I see not whence the everyday joys of life are to come," said Chen, the "Flower Hermit," who wrote a book on gardening more than a hundred years ago.

Judging by the incidents recorded in the pages of Chinese history, much has been expected sometimes of Chinese gardeners. When the extravagant ruler, Yang Di, sat on the throne, immense gardens were laid out around the palace, and orders given that the flowering trees were never to be without blossoms. So skilful were those who attended to these matters that the artificial flowers by which the real ones were replaced when necessity arose, were so beautifully made as to escape detection!

To a thrifty Chinese in these utilitarian days "a primrose a primrose is to him and *something more*." Sunflower seeds and lotus seeds are prized as sweetmeats, chrysanthemums and fish make a delicious stew, lily bulbs in syrup, an excellent dessert, water-lily seeds are considered a specific against infectious diseases. Camelia seeds produce valued lotion for the hair. The petals of orange lilies can be made into a most palatable vegetable, and probably to the "Mandarins of the kettle" (the cooks) there are few items in a florist's catalogue which could not be turned to double advantage.

My pupil Wang has invited us one day to go and see his

garden. The " many coloured spring is here," as Po Djü the poet said.

> "The secrets of the scented hearts of flowers,
> Are whispered through the air."

The hot sunshine, bleaching the stones in the courtyard, brings out the heavy scent of the blossoms of the pumelo tree pressed up against the corner of the house, and accentuates the fragrance of the green orchids in the pots by the doorway. The red roses climbing the walls in eager haste to get away from the sunny court, and tumbling back branch over branch in their confusion, are purpling with the heat and growing limp. There was no shade in the courtyard, and the gardens of young Wang sounded more attractive, but we were doomed to disappointment. Young Wang came to meet us, and escorted us across the large and dimly-lit guest hall, which at a first casual glance resembled some public place of business. Furriers were turning over the winter furs of the family at a long table preparatory, probably, to storing them for the summer. Some tailors not far off were busy cutting out new garments, several ladies of the household looked on from the background, presumably superintending matters with the help and advice of sundry serving-women, who acted as spokeswomen. Two or three children, or probably slave girls, an elderly manservant or so, who may possibly have been " poor relations," helped to make up the party.

Young Wang's mother, who had by now appeared on the scenes, conducted us by a dark and musty passage round corners and up steps past untidy store-rooms, and dim visions of hams and herbs and mouldy lanterns

hanging from dusty beams, to the upper guest room, a modern apartment redolent of the new era. Plate glass doors, and plenty of them, had taken the place of the carved lattice work and paper panes of other days. Blue landscapes in woven velvet, "made in Japan," graced the walls, and an octagonal centre table was carefully shrouded in a dust sheet—the last new thing in foreign tablecloths! For the rest—tiny tea tables alternating with substantial chairs, and flanked by spittoons, were placed opposite to each other in two long rows down the centre of the room and still savoured of the old style of things. A couple of exquisite old porcelain jars, "blue as the sky after rain when seen between the clouds," stood in front of the inevitable foreign mirror.

The glass doors opened on to the first of the gardens, but, alas! it possessed none of the glories of a garden. There were no flower beds, no lawns, no trees, and no stone bridges, spanning Liliputian lakes by the side of fantastic rocks, made to represent miniature mountains, so dear to the Chinese garden lover.

There was nothing to be seen but tiers of shelves lined with pot plants in a paved enclosure surrounded by "open work" walls of ornamental stone and tile—in short, the place might have passed for a mammoth greenhouse, minus the glass. True, many of the roses and other plants were the choicest of their kind, and some of the elaborate pots might have graced the shelves of a porcelain cabinet. We passed through into the garden beyond, but it was a second edition of the first, a trifle less formal perhaps and considerably less tidy, and here dwarfed pine trees and maples were shown us with pride.

An interesting account is given in a book more than a

hundred years old of the methods by which these dwarf trees, so dear to the hearts of both Chinese and Japanese, are cultivated.

"From a bough which bears fruit they (the Chinese gardeners) remove a circular band of the bark, about an inch wide, covering the bare part with mould that is kept in place by a piece of matting. Above it is suspended either a pot or a horn with small holes at the bottom through which the water, falling drop by drop, keeps up the humidity of the soil. The branch pushes out roots above the place from which the bark has been peeled. . .

"This operation is performed in spring. In the autumn the branch is cut off from the parent tree and transplanted either into a jar or into the open ground, and it produces fruit the following year.

"If they wish the tree to appear small and decayed, it is coated at different times with successive layers of molasses or treacle which attracts millions of ants. These attack the bark of the tree and give to it a look of age."

In a garden on a still higher level, bushes of the *Lah mei Hwa* and other flowering shrubs had been allowed to grow beyond the pot stage. There was, as goes without saying, a white azalea, which preserves a house from fire! By this time the lack of order, inevitable in all things Chinese, was sorely apparent, and accumulations of necessary but unsightly oddments, usually connected with a gardener's tool-house or potting-shed, cropped up here and there. But the best bit of the garden lay still before us—the bit which did not count and into which apparently nobody but eccentric outside kingdom folk would ever care to go. We espied it from below and

climbed up a flight of disused steps to get there. Rank grass, weeds, remnants of an overgrown vegetable patch covered the ground, but overhead a bower of peach trees and of loquats, a tangle of grape vines, bamboos and orange trees shaded us from the blaze of the sun, and the faint fragrance of the white pumelo blossoms filled the air.

For a cool spot, however, on a hot day, young Wang had a better suggestion. Behind the guest room, with the plate glass windows, there was a shaded court into which little sunlight ever crept. A great stone tank, full of cold clear water and darting goldfish, occupied the centre in a setting of palms and ferns of stately growth. Cold stone and dripping water and the shadow of green leaves—what could be more pleasant on a day of summer heat ?

My pupils, Lu and Wang, and a later addition to the class in a youth called Chang, who, having graduated at the Government school in Western subjects, was considered quite a scholar, have presented me with their photographs.

The "shower forth of likenesses" does a thriving trade here as elsewhere in China, and in these days of foreign fashions, the photographer is looked up to as one who is well versed in these intricate matters.

Inside his studio efforts have been made to create a Western atmosphere. A long tea table, resembling the one at the "mad hatter's tea party," occupies the end of the room. A marcella counterpane does duty as a tablecloth, for, according to oriental taste, marcella counterpanes are especially adapted for this purpose; cups and saucers, not of dainty native porcelain, but of

MY PUPILS LU, WANG AND CHANG, PRESENTED ME WITH THEIR PHOTOGRAPHS.

IN THE CENTRE SITS THE DESCENDANT OF CONFUCIUS,

cheap German ware, are placed up and down the table in long rows as for a school treat tea. Samples of the photographer's work in foreign frames are hung in untidy profusion on the walls, and amongst them various garments of ready-made costumes (for the benefit of customers who prefer to be photographed in other people's clothes) are dangling from hooks and nails. Two foreign suits are in great request, so much so that the collars and shirt fronts belonging to them are greasy and grey with use. The foreign suit is a bait by which both soldiers and civilians are attracted into the photographer's web. It has never occurred to him to add the luxury of a dressing room, so the changes of costume go on in public. A " vulgar " bouquet in a foreign glass vase, some walking sticks and English books complete the *mise en scene*. On my arrival on the scenes the other day, I hesitated, seeing a soldier's uniform scattered on the floor, whilst its owner was struggling with strange European garments in the background.

" It is of no consequence," the photographer's mother assured me, " please enter."

Strange ! that one of these outside kingdom folk, who must be so accustomed to the peculiarities of photographer's studios should show surprise or hesitancy ! That was evidently her thought as I politely insisted on lingering in the outer room till the soldiers were once again in their ordinary attire.

My pupil Chang, the graduate, took us round the two Government schools of the city the other day. The large airy rooms with more windows than wall space were characteristic of the new order of things. The blackboards, the modern maps and charts, clean and new,

stood out in bold contrast to the dusty Confucian tablets, before which sticks of incense were smouldering sulkily as though conscious that they had fallen on evil days. Along the corridor were other significant signs of the times in the rows of rifles, sham rifles certainly, to be used in drill, but drill is one of the important features of the curriculum, and some schools for small boys in the province have practically given up most other subjects in its favour. The delighted pupils in their German caps and miniature uniforms fancy themselves but one step removed from the genuine article.

Chang, anxious to show us all the modern improvements in his own school invited us to see the bathrooms, truly an innovation, but distinctly disappointing at close quarters. In a room with a mud floor, not unlike a large fowl-house, stood a solitary wooden tub of the kind which, when occupied, allows of no margin. Evidently it was considered a work of supererogation to provide a clean apartment for people needing baths.

The pupils, nearly 400 in all, varying in age from ten years to twenty and over, the sons, many of them, of well-to-do parents, get their schooling for nothing. The boarders, however, are required to pay about a pound a year for their "rice."

Instruction is given in most Western subjects from English to singing. The English master, however, could hardly be called proficient. He had acquired his vocabulary from a Japanese, the Japanese, in his turn, had "picked it up" from a fellow countryman, who, so it was said, had actually studied the language at its source, viz., in America, and could moreover speak the dialect used in England! By going through so many processes

English as taught in the "City of the River Orchid" had become almost a new tongue.

To a son of Han, accustomed to a language in which all parts of speech are interchangeable, the English idiom presents many difficulties. Therefore, a pupil, who promises to exert himself in order to make progress with his studies, writes as follows :—

"I is must will use work to exhaust one's strength to investigate may to beg advancement." He mentions that the weather is hot. "So are warm I could not any to do matter," but he allows that he is well. "I am both fresh and sound," and hopes his teacher "will not doubt that he is lazy"—meaning, of course, the exact opposite.

"The spring-time has feet," say the Chinese, and the hills, which a week or so ago were innocent of flowers, save for a few sprigs of wild and scentless lilac sticking out of the ground like spikes, are now in the words of a Chinese poet :—

> "Girdled with ivy,
> And robed with wisteria,
> Cloaked with the orchid,
> And crowned with azalea."

The azaleas, or the "red sunset flower," as the people call them, turn the sunny slopes of the hillsides into a gorgeous blaze of rose-pink blossoms, shadowed here and there by a slender pine in a bower of white wisteria. At the foot of one of those "sunset" hills stands the little temple for sick horses. Two prancing steeds, evidently in the best of health, are painted on the outer walls to encourage, no doubt, the poor diseased creatures which are brought there to be cured by the gods. A horse, so runs the superstition, has the power of seeing demons and

at the sight of them he stands petrified with fear, whereas the donkey is supposed to be afraid of nothing.

Foxes abound on the "red sunset" hill and make raids on the farmers' homesteads with impunity, for there are not many who care to meddle with these weird mysterious "beings," whose power in the land is so great. Many cases here, as elsewhere in China, have been known of fox possession and of cruel deaths brought about by the malady.

All foxes are said to be sagacious—and an official who has a difficult law case to solve will often seek wisdom of the fox. In some of the Yamens there is a small building set apart for the worship of this strange creature, an empty building save for the incense table, and, presumably, the invisible spirit of the animal, in whose honour the candles are lit and the wine presented.

The azaleas on the hillsides are seldom allowed to grow into tall bushes, for firewood is expensive, and even azalea boughs can be turned into fuel. One meets peasant after peasant carrying his bundles of azalea branches starred with rose-pink buds, not for the adornment of his house, but for the cooking of the evening rice!

All things in China must be turned to a practical use, if not for fuel, then for food or for medicine, and on those warm spring days the village children set to work to gather the wild vegetables growing by the wayside, chief among which are the tiny wild onions, and in the shops the young twigs of the *cedrela Chinensis* are being sold as some of the delicacies of the season. This "scent of spring" tree as they call it, has a flavour, when cooked, of the most delicate kind of leek. Later on, the petals of the orange lilies and the stalks of balsams will make other vegetable dishes equally delicious.

Just now, the cooks at the food stalls in the crowded city streets, are busy boiling snails, and on the rubbish heaps outside the doors of wealthy mansions, snail shells, by the score, give evidence of late festivities.

Last autumn the coolies jogging along the winding paths across the fields were, many of them, carrying that which at first sight looked like white band boxes slung on either end of their bamboo poles. Then it turned out to be the tallow from the tallow trees. Now in these first warm days of spring, soft downy chickens just hatched, huddled in open baskets, have taken the place of the tallow. They are cheap—three eggs a piece and their number seems to be legion. By hundreds and by thousands, day after day, they are brought along the country roads and sold to the country people and the townsfolk.

I looked at them with interest, having been with them all on the eve of their birthday, some ten miles off in a little village, hiding in a dip at the foot of the wooded hills, divided by the fields of wheat and golden rape from the river.

For weeks at a time "Dai Giao Si" the teacher sister, lives and works amongst the people of the village, occupying the tiny upper storey of one of the small bare houses—beautiful on the day of our visit with boughs of geranium-pink azaleas.

The incubators, of primitive design, which had been in existence probably scores, if not hundreds, of years before such things were known in Western lands, occupied a large barn-like building at the end of the village street.

As we stepped through the door, which was hastily closed to behind us, the heat of invisible fires on every

side turned the atmosphere into that of an oven. Stokers, bare to the waist and streaming with moisture, gathered round us inquiringly. Ah! we were twelve hours too soon, they said. We should have come early the next morning and nearer the time at which the chickens were due to arrive. We could see, however, what there was to see!

Down the length of the long barn, the greater part of the floor space was occupied by three wooden platforms, one a few feet above the other, each one covered with a thick layer of eggs, 60,000 in all. Here and there a premature arrival was breaking through its shell and in a few hours the whole of the 60,000 would follow suit, and the men described to us, how at this juncture they were kept busy, throwing the newly-hatched chickens, four at a time, into the coolies' baskets to be carried post haste through the country for sale. For two days, fortunately for those concerned, no food would be necessary.

On the floor at either end of the building, erections, akin to old-fashioned thatched bee-hives in outward shape, but twice as large, were packed with eggs still in the early stages—200 eggs in a hive and these were kept heated night and day by charcoal fires. In all there were over 125,000 eggs in the building at that moment.

We were shown a hole, the size of an egg, tunnelled in the wall, and letting in a tiny shaft of daylight. Each egg is held there for inspection and the concentrated light shining through gives evidence of its quality.

No one could offer any suggestion with regard to the date of the first incubator. The industry, as far as they knew, had always been in existence. When a small chicken can be bought for one halfpenny or less, one is

hardly surprised at the numerous cocks and hens to be met with in the city. Many of them eke out the scanty living provided by penurious owners, by sallying forth in less frequented streets to gather crumbs from the rich man's table. The risk of losing them is considerably minimised by the ingenious plan by which each bird wears, so to speak, his " house colours." Thus Mr. Bas' poultry are painted from neck to tail a bright magenta. Mrs. Li's, on the contrary, are green, and those belonging to the old man at the end of the lane, are daubed with scarlet, whereas our friends' poultry just round the corner are streaked with pale blue.

The hatching of chickens, however, is but a small and unimportant industry compared to that of the rearing of silkworms.

The other day when sitting in the guest hall of the house of Djao-Djoh, one of the school girls, partaking of tea and hard-boiled eggs, our hostess, a dapper little woman in trim " gwadz " of dark blue silk, was requested to show the foreign guest a few of the young worms of the season. She agreed with alacrity, and produced them forthwith from the inner recesses of her upper garment, where they were kept for warmth. For some days she had " worn " the sheets of rough paper sprinkled with eggs, but the eggs were hatched now, and she displayed to view a flat box half-filled with faded mulberry leaf crumbled almost to a powder. On further inspection one perceived that only some of the crumbled particles were inanimate and that these were being rapidly devoured by the rest. " In about six weeks' time," she said, " they will climb the hill."

" And how many have you this year ? "

"How many!" She was not sure. "Some tens of thousands. The teacher mother must come and see them when they are bigger."

The next day a man with silkworms for sale appeared on the scenes. He unwrapped a cloth, and produced some sheets of rough brown paper, so thickly speckled with tiny dark brown moving clots that the paler brown of the paper was hardly visible. "The eggs are just hatched," he said. As long as the baby-worms were left in the condition in which they had emerged from the eggs, that is to say, with a tiny bit of white substance attached to the tail end of the microscopic body, it was not necessary to provide them with food, for they remained presumably in a state of "arrested development." Our friend sold his young worms by the ounce; the tenth part of an ounce cost 24 cash—about one halfpenny—and one ounce of grubs, if carefully reared should produce from 150 to 160 ounces of silk.

The daily meals, however, for these tiny morsels, especially where their numbers run into tens of thousands, is no light matter. In early days their digestion is quickly upset, and from every mulberry leaf the sinews must be removed, and the remainder carefully chopped and re-chopped until a mulberry leaf mince, neither too wet nor too dry, has been provided for their delectation. Those who are rearing worms for profit, observe rules of this kind most punctiliously. Later on, as the worms increase in stature, their appetite becomes prodigious. Fortunately, however, their digestive powers also improve and mulberry leaves can be served *au naturel*, provided they are freshly gathered and *not wet*. Meals at constant intervals throughout the day do not suffice, and their

owners have to sit up at night or provide them with night attendants in order to supply these omnivorous feeders with continual nourishment.

Those who have studied the habits of the creatures for hundreds of years (according to historical records since the time of the "Yellow Emperor" more than 2000 B.C.) assure one that silkworms observe one day in seven as a day of rest, and sleep steadily through the twenty-four hours. Some, however, keep one day and some another, which is unfortunate for the caterers who are therefore never off duty.

Towards the end of the sixth week Djao-Djoh announced that the ceremony of "climbing the hill" had commenced and we were invited to come and see. She added mysteriously that no noise must be made and no words used which were not good to hear ("buh hao ting"), a somewhat surprising piece of advice to be offered by a hobbledehoy school girl to a teacher mother of dignified demeanour.

We soon perceived, however, that this was no ordinary occasion. A subdued atmosphere reigned in the house, as we silently followed Djao-Djoh's mother up the dimly-lit stairs and entered the darkened rooms on the first floor, one room leading into another, large empty rooms, save for the humble spinners of silk.

Here and there sheaves of rice straw erected in tubs and pails or propped against the walls made "hills" or bushes for the benefit of the climbers. Clinging to the straw near the top of the sheaves, or halfway up, or even nearer to the ground, one and another had come to a standstill to "vomit" the precious silk. Tucked away inside the fluffy balls of white or golden yellow the worms

themselves were no longer visible. In each room stood a small pan of glowing charcoal, as warmth at this stage is of all things necessary—warmth and quiet and a " dim religious " light.

" Here are the precious ones," said our guide. " Can you not see the precious ones ? I will open the shutters just a very, very little so that you may see the precious ones more clearly."

In every other sentence she made use of the words " precious ones," laying stress on the term of endearment. It was all part of the performance, for silkworms, we discovered, are peculiarly sensitive at this critical moment of their lives, and will take umbrage at any discourteous language, whereas polite phrases will work wonders, and induce them to spin with a will.

Here and there real flowers, and bits of red silk, and strips of red paper are placed in conspicuous positions in token of good luck, and also, presumably, by way of encouragement to the tiny workers.

By refusing nourishment they give the first sign of their desire to " climb the hill " and set to work.

" And when they have finished spinning ? " we asked, " what happens then ? "

Whereupon Djao-Djoh's mother dropped her voice to so low a whisper that we could not hear what she said. It was explained afterwards, when there were no " listening " silkworms to be offended by the words, or frightened into inaction by the dread prospect which awaited them, that a death by slow torture in a cauldron of boiling water would be their final end.

My next sight of silkworms was in this piteous condition. A countrywoman sat at her wheel briskly winding

off the silken threads from a seething mass of once fluffy balls which bobbed up and down in great iron pots of boiling water over a fierce charcoal fire.

When the silk was all removed, the poor dead remains would form a palatable dish, and the woman at the wheel scrunched one or two between her teeth with evident relish.

"They are best when served in oil," some one suggested, but to those engaged in the trade this is considered unlucky, so much so that the next generation of silk-worms, incensed at such treatment of their ancestors, will decline to make any silk that is worth having.

Why they should draw the line at oil and "wink at" being eaten, does not appear, but according to the books of the ancients the scent of oil is one of the seven things held in abhorence by these fastidious creatures. They dislike smoke; they object to wine and vinegar, and cannot stand the scent of musk or oil. They abominate damp leaves or hot leaves, and have a peculiar aversion from any one pounding in a mortar, and (though this seems unnecessarily faddy) from seeing people clad in mourning.

In India, where the maxim "Take not the life you have no power to give" is held sacred by many, tepid water is used instead of boiling water and the creatures allowed to escape. The Chinese, however, aver that the silk comes off in better condition, and also more easily, when the cocoons are boiled.

CHAPTER X

The Dragon House *

The proclamation ordaining that all who, after three weeks' grace, steadfastly persist in smoking opium will be shot, still hangs on the city walls, but like a tin cat in a cornfield, it no longer alarms.

It is some weeks ago now since whispered words at the Yamen announced the fact (in confidence) that authorities at headquarters, fearing the result of such drastic legislation in these unsettled days, had cancelled the first order. This prudent measure was not proclaimed publicly, however, and the scarecrow remained intact.

Stricter methods were in vogue at the Yamen. Numbers had increased in the Marshalsea, but some had left on their own initiative. No wonder ! for escape was easy enough under the circumstances, as no locked doors barred the way except at night-time.

A good part of the ramshackle building was to be rebuilt, and already housebreakers were at work demolishing some of the outer rooms which had given promise for some time past of tumbling to pieces of their own accord, and seemed to be merely kept in place by clinging cobwebs and glutinous grime. The two characters " Djiah-Ma " the name of a military general of olden times, famous for his power over demons, were inscribed on slips of red paper and pasted near the base of the walls in order to keep at bay the earth gods, who might otherwise take offence at this disturbance of the soil.

* Gaol in Yamen.

Meanwhile the unfortunate opium prisoners had been gathered into one room, and, for the sake of security, and also no doubt with a view to economy of space, had been compressed into two wooden cages.

True, they were large cages, some twenty feet by twelve, small enough, however, when apportioned out to seventy or eighty grown men.

The bearded idol in his shrine had been taken down to make room for them, and, with the exception of a narrow aisle down the centre occupied by the jailer's family and the visitors, the greater part of the floor space was taken up by the new erections. They might almost have been cattle pens, but for the fact that they were roofed in overhead by heavy wooden rails.

With the exception of the empty rice basins slung on ropes attached to the bars, and a couple of necessary buckets, there were no accessories of any kind. Men of a respectable class were herded together with coolies of a low stamp, and amongst them stood the king of the beggars—a sorry-looking individual whose profession in life made filthy rags and matted locks a necessary part of his costume, though he was popularly supposed to be a man of considerable private means.

The prisoners peering out at us between the bars seemed, strangely enough, by no means discouraged by the situation, and some of them were even disposed to look on life with merriment.

A few had already broken off the opium habit, and were merely waiting until their friends or relations should come forward with money for the fine, and for other prison expenses.

As the weather grew warmer, and numbers increased,

the condition of the cages became more and more insanitary and repulsive, so much so, that the cheerfulness, not to say the levity of some of the poor unfortunates, became irritating rather than commendable. There was something almost inhuman in the callousness displayed.

Some few, however, callous no longer, were huddled on the floor behind the bars, sick with fever, and more than one complained bitterly of the vermin. One stalwart fellow, following a custom not unusual amongst a certain non-fastidious class, was busily engaged in "weeding" one of his exceedingly ragged garments, and at each successful find popped the results of his labours into his mouth!

The elegant young official, in his immaculate gown of pale blue silk, who, with his immobile face and eyebrows permanently raised, condescended to be present during the medical examination of doubtful cases, was careful to keep clear of the cages, and objected to hearing complaints on the subject. The prisoners, he assured us, could, if they liked, gain their release any day by the payment of the fine. If they preferred to plead poverty, and remain where they were, that was their own business.

It was easy to recognise a really wealthy individual on the occasion of these medical inspections, not indeed by the quality of his clothes or the length of his nails, but by the attitude of the onlookers, from the young man of the raised eyebrows to a certain Yamen underling, a gentleman with "rat eyes," whose manner varied from moment to moment from an engaging suavity when face to face with Ba Giao Si, to a ferret-like sharpness when turned the other way. The test, a drop or so of blood in

a solution of alcohol and apomorphine was almost "infallible" and many anxious eyes peered into the tiny cup to see for themselves the result, for the rich man was worth many thousands of dollars, and his conviction would mean possible pickings and certain perquisites for those in charge of the case.

The countryside in these days is constantly scoured by parties of soldiers in search of opium crops, and a substantial fine is levied on the owner at the rate of so much a mow * or a part of a mow. The soldiers go about their work, it is whispered rather too zealously, and an unfortunate tea-grower, not many miles away from this city, complained somewhat bitterly of his treatment at their hands. On the top of a hill in the midst of his tea plantation the emissaries of the law beheld an unmistakable opium plant. They measured off without more ado a mow of the land with the solitary opium poppy flaunting gaily in the centre. Naturally enough the owner of the property denied being even accessory to the act. A bird, it was suggested, had deposited the forbidden seed, but as somebody must be fined, and the bird was out of the question, the tea-planter would have to bear the responsibility. In the end, after much discussion on the subject at the Yamen, a *slight reduction* of the fine was agreed to !

Young Wang, with a smile, told me this morning of the shooting of a prisoner on the grass-strewn hill outside the city wall—not a grower of opium,† but a robber The executioner happened to be a bad shot, and had wounded his victim four times over before killing him. As I expressed my horror Wang continued to smile, probably

* One mow = sixth part of an acre.

† Opium growers are liable to the death penalty.

more out of conformity to custom than from lack of sympathy. Although one never knows, for a Chinese seldom puts himself "in his neighbour's shoes," and often sheer inability to do so makes him curiously indifferent to the sufferings of others. Only a few weeks ago, in a neighbouring city, two criminals, heavily fettered were ordered out to the execution ground to be strangled. More than a hundred soldiers followed, goading the poor miserable prisoners into a run, but with the ponderous chains around their ankles it was an impossibility to go at a quick pace. Forced on by their merciless guards they jerked along with painful hops and jumps, falling every now and again and struggling back to their feet.

The crowd looked on *with amusement*, and two minor officials borne in their sedan chairs at the back of the procession laughed at the "comical" sight.

It is only fair to add, however, that the Governor of the city when hearing of the proceeding, expressed regret, and thenceforward convicted prisoners were conveyed to the execution ground in sedan chairs.

On the grass land outside the walls of the "City of the River Orchid," several robbers' coffins are lying in the open, worn and weather stained. We recognised them by the one chipped corner. The slips of wood lopped off are kept at the Yamen as a proof that the execution in question has indeed taken place, and the body of the criminal encoffined.

Many a tragic story could be told of that "Terrace of Night" outside the city walls. The other day we passed the burial-place of a young and exceedingly gifted student, who, some years ago, had professed great interest

in the "foreign religion," coming Sunday after Sunday to the services, and expounding to others with much apparent sincerity the doctrine of the Truth.

But the day came when whispered reports reached the ears of the "teacher sister" denouncing the "earnest" student as an opium smoker and an evil liver.

When faced with the matter, he indignantly denied the accusation and, seizing a knife, said he would prove his innocence with his blood. Laying his hand on the table he chopped off a finger which fell bleeding to the floor. Yelling in a frenzy he flung himself down beside it.

The "foreign teacher," seeing the uncontrolled state of mind in which he was in, left him to the care of his own relations, sending back, however, a couple of splints and some permanganate of potash, with which the old mother deftly put the finger back again in its place. But its owner, alas! was not destined to need its use for many more years. Abandoning himself to his profligate life he drifted from bad to worse, and before very long brought himself under suspicion of the authorities by the foul murder of a man. A gruesome tale was noised abroad of the victim's corpse, tied in a sack and borne by the assassins to the top of a lonely hill for burial, when the sack with its heavy burden overbalanced at the top of a ridge and bounded down the slope to the valley below. Thither the would-be grave diggers pursued it and tumbled it with nervous haste into a hole hurriedly excavated.

But "eyes and ears" (spies) were not wanting. Soon after that the murderer and his accomplice were tracked

down, tried and condemned. Without further delay they were shot on the grave-strewn hill outside the walls.

That night the bodies lay out on the grass unburied, and those who passed that way the following morning shook their heads approvingly over the sight that met their gaze, and murmured that verily indeed this was the judgment of heaven, for one of the two men had been more than half-devoured by the dogs, *and that one was the murderer, despite the fact that he was little more than skin and bone*, whereas the body of the other who had merely given a hand in the burial on the hillside, had been left untouched by the scavengers, albeit he was large and fleshy.

"Truly the gods are just," said one to the other, for to arrive in the nether world physically incomplete is (in China) the worst fate imaginable.

Soldiers in these days enjoy the reflected glory of the "patriots" of the Revolution. They represent the new order of things and have acquired, through no merit of their own, a position of power which, alas! many of them abuse.

The high rate of pay (ten dollars a month) has attracted many men into their ranks, men—who, in the old days would have looked down on the profession with contempt. It is said that in very many instances the wages are actually paid in full, another great innovation, but one wily official in a place that shall be nameless has hit on a plan which is regarded as eminently satisfactory to all concerned. He has recently enlisted a large number of elderly men who fully concurred with his proposal that as they were getting old and past work they must be

content with six dollars instead of ten. It was most reasonable, as every one agreed, and the official, as goes without saying, pocketed the extra $4 a man.

The Army, even in these days of peace, is a goose that lays many golden eggs. The other day an enterprising servant desiring to " better himself," took a situation as cook to the captain of a company of ten. Roused one night by his master to get him something to eat, he seized the first thing that offered, viz., a loaded rifle, with which he poked the fire. Not unnaturally the gun went off, causing the instant death of the cook. Now the Government allowance to the family of a soldier *killed on duty* is 300 dollars. True, the man was only a cook, but under the circumstances he could easily be reported as a soldier. The official himself would see to the matter. He did so and finally divided the spoils with the man's mother who was thankful to get any compensation at all.

There has been much consternation lately amongst the people of the countryside over the new " men-pai " (literally *door board*, giving number of inhabitants in each house). It is an order from headquarters. All who are not natives of the place must be guaranteed as respectable by those who are. Unfortunately, however, doubt exists as to the qualifications of a resident. To have lived seventeen years in the same town, or even seventy, does not count, if it is known that the family came originally from some other part of the country.

A census has been taken in China from time immemorial. No wonder, however, that people look upon the old records with some suspicion. At one period only " taxable people " were included, and officials, slaves,

persons over sixty, the weak and the sick, etc., etc., were omitted !

In the thirteenth century, however, details were gone into more fully, and the head of a household was required to state on his " door board " not only his own name, and that of his wife, and his children, his slaves and other inmates of his house, but also the number of his *animals !*

CHAPTER XI

The Gem-Hill City

Deborah, my travelling companion of other days, has arrived on the scenes in order to join me on a little journey from this province of Chekiang to the Po Yang lake in Kiangsi.

On the eve of our departure in one of the brown-hooded boats, the dark waters of the river were studded with fairy lights from shore to shore—monster stars of red and gold floating down with the current, like Liliputian boats of fire. It was not, however, an illumination in honour of the foreign guests, but a deed of merit performed by a wealthy citizen for the benefit of the wandering spirits of the drowned.

Only a few days before we had seen other well-intentioned philanthropists going from grave to grave in the "city of old age," dabbing a few handfuls of lime on the top of each grass mound, from which apparently senseless act, benefit will be derived, not only by those dead souls who have no kith and kin to worship at their tombs, but by their benefactors themselves who will thereby store up merit in the next world.

Along the lonely country roads, these doers of good deeds have erected here and there signposts without signboards, but furnished instead with a wooden framework, the size of a bird cage, in which those who would earn rewards hereafter place a candle for the use of wayfarers.

The benighted traveller may, if he please, appropriate the light to help him on his way.

The "clear bright" festival, when all respectable Confucianists worship at their family graves, took place some weeks ago, and on that most propitious of days, the farmers sowed the summer rice in the tiny seed beds prepared for the purpose, beds filled with wet mud so smooth and soft and slimy as to look like the glossiest and heaviest of brown-hued satin.

Later on, as the thick crop grew and flourished, the seedlings were planted out in straight rows, a bunch at a time, in the "water fields." At the "clear bright" festival light green cakes, of which one ingredient is grass, are eaten with satisfaction by both young and old, for doubtless they will bring good luck.

Once again the gods had manifested their pleasure, and the rice crops, of which we should see so many on our journey through Kiangsi, bid fair to be even more plentiful than the year before.

From the "City of Eternal Hills" nestling amongst the wooded mountains on the borders of Chekiang, we started one fresh morning in May on our thirty miles road journey into the province of Kiangsi.

The matter of transport had offered difficulty. Firms supplying sedan chairs existed in plenty, but chair-bearers at this time of year, when the crops required attention, were hard to obtain. The old chairmen, moreover, were rapidly dying off in these days of scarce and expensive opium. All their lives long they had derived fictitious strength from the now forbidden drug, and when deprived thereof, with constitutions undermined, soon lost their hold on life.

Were there no horses to be obtained ? No. The place hardly possessed such a thing. Could we not hire a wheelbarrow ? Assuredly not, for the barrowmen were paid by weight, and preferred a 700 lb. load to human freight.

In another year or so we might possibly go by rail, so said the optimists. True the railway was not yet built, and the nearest line was 500 or 600 miles away, but there had been an attempt made, some little time ago, towards constructing a thirty-mile railway from the "City of Eternal Hills" to the "Gem-Hill City" across the border, and had it not been for a quarrel between the European engineer and his Chinese colleagues, no doubt the matter would have prospered. As things stood, the foreigner, stoned and buffeted, had not unnaturally thrown up his appointment, and the rails were rusting on the river bank.

At last, after much "talking of price," chair-bearers were forthcoming, and bidding farewell to our kind hostesses, the two Swiss ladies at the Mission Station who had royally entertained us with food for mind and body during three days of incessant rain, we were borne away up the narrow street of flagstones between the grey-walled houses, and into the open country along a paved road some six feet wide in the midst of rice fields, so lately planted that the tufts of rice blades, sprouting above the water, looked like stiff bunches of grass poised on gigantic mirrors.

Now and again we passed a village of low-roofed houses with yellow mud walls, snuggling under the grateful shade of gigantic camphor trees—trees held sacred by the country people, as the tiny shrines, against the broad trunks, gave evidence.

Here and there ripe wheat, golden in the sunlight—"fields of yellow clouds," as the Chinese say—broke the monotony of the rice crops. Women and children, with primitive reaping hooks, were hard at work, and sheaves of garnered grain hung from the branches of trees to dry, or stood in rows round the mud walls of the homestead.

The road must, we fancied, be of ancient date, for over and over again a general upheaval had taken place amongst the paving stones, leaving mud holes and deep clefts. This mutilated condition of the highway must have mattered considerably to the wheel-barrow men who, year in and year out, pass in their thousands and scores of thousands along that road with their heavy loads. Never for one moment during that thirty-mile journey were we out of sight of one or many of the great army of burden bearers. Carriers of bamboo chairs with matting awnings, like those in which we ourselves were riding; coolies with heavily weighted baskets dangling from bamboo poles slung across their shoulders, and last, but not least, the men with their wheel-barrows. Their loads, weighing anything from 300 to 800 lbs. and bulging out on either side of the clumsy one-wheeled vehicle, extended over the greater part of the roadway, so far dwarfing the barrow man that he looked a mere pigmy struggling with a giant's burden. Time and time again did we pass one in difficulties, straining every muscle to move the wheel an inch further on the way across a stony chasm, and often upsetting it altogether, to be finally helped back to level ground by a colleague in like distress. So far are appearances deceptive, especially in China, that the road which had seemingly been neglected for scores of years is, on the contrary, repaired every twelve months—one

half at a time—and the signs of decay are caused by the very people who suffer from it most. A continued stream of barrows will spoil any road, they say, in an incredibly short space of time.

The " Gem-Hill City," our first halt in the province of Kiangsi, lies on the banks of the river of " Broad Sincerity," in a green valley of rice fields, guarded from afar by a tangled chain of mountains of amethyst hues, blue-shrouded in the distance.

The city with its " mash " of brown-roofed houses lies like a gigantic and badly written " P " facing the river. The yellow waters, swollen by recent rains, race past the city walls, and the bridges of brown boats creak and sway.

The " Hill of Virtue," crowned by temple buildings, half-hidden amongst the trees, stands across the water, imparting lucky influences, and preserving untouched that which would mean wealth and comfort to many a poor citizen, in other words, a rich store of precious coal. The people, still fettered by the " wind and water " superstition, are unwilling to disturb the soil in search of it for fear of disturbing the luck of the city.

Many years ago, when the first Protestant missionaries arrived in the place, they were, so it was rumoured, within an ace of purchasing the site for their own buildings. The leading men of the place arose in haste to prevent such a catastrophe. The evil influences of outside barbarians would assuredly counteract the harmony of the " White Tiger " and the " Blue Dragon." Without more delay they subscribed the necessary funds for the rebuilding of the temple on the wooded summit, which long had lain in ruins, and the gods pleased and propitiated, thenceforth reigned supreme. True in the early

days of the Republic there had been a reaction, and large numbers, like Fuhi in the seventh century, had desired to abolish the idols, but those in authority were cautious. There should be no destroying in haste to repent at leisure. To satisfy the reformers, however, the great idol in the City Temple should, for a time, be enclosed in a case and locked up.

Since the old days, when the possible annexation of the "Hill of Virtue" by the outside kingdom folk had caused such perturbation amongst the big men of the city, feelings had considerably changed towards them. The "Venerable Great Man Li," one of the wealthiest and most influential of residents had, with others of his ilk, changed from foe to friend, and still the story is told of the night when a rebel army was marching towards the gates, and the outside kingdom folk saved the city from destruction.

They at least had shown no fear, and those who listened to the preaching of the doctrine that evening, repeated the strange words that they had heard: "Except the Lord keep the city the watchman watcheth but in vain," and the Lord to whom they prayed was One who neither "slumbered nor slept." When the morning dawned behold the army of the enemy was nowhere to be seen. The rebel soldiers had agreed to concentrate their forces on the "Hill of Virtue" outside the gates, but the prayer of the outside kingdom folk had evidently wrought confusion in their midst. The main body of the troops had mistaken the order and had marched to another "Hill of Virtue" some miles further off, whilst their comrades, arriving at the gates of the "Gem-Hill City," and supposing themselves deserted, had turned and fled.

In these days the houses of the foreign teachers stands for all that is of good report. To pass from the slimy pavements between the disgorging shops, the putrid smells of burning oil and mouldy bean-curd, of rotting fruit, black-speckled with the flies, of offal nosed by the pigs, and sniffed at by the mangy dogs—to get away from the moving crowd of burden bearers, the insistent shouting of those who want to pass, the strident tones of unrestrained wrath, the crying and the wailing and the cursing. To turn from these demon-ridden haunts where paths must be crooked, and incense sticks burnt at twilight, and fire crackers exploded, and children hung with padlocks, and gongs beaten and windows closed, except on the lucky side, for fear of devils ; to turn from these things into the one little foreign compound, that the place possesses, is to pass from the twilight into the sunshine, from dirt to cleanliness, from crooked paths to straight ones, from tumult to peace.

The widowed daughter-in-law of the " Venerable Great Man Li " has invited " our jade toes to benignly approach her snail-shell of a house " not that the invitation was couched in such formal words, which in these days of a " People's Kingdom " are considered old-fashioned, and possibly a trifle ridiculous. In accordance with old custom, however, she sent sedan chairs to bring us to the house. It was raining, but the blue and yellow hangings of the chairs provided ample shelter, and as for our chair-bearers, their bamboo hats, the size of tea trays, were on account of their central position, more efficacious than umbrellas.

The " Li Gia " (home of the Li family) grows larger year by year, till by now the massive grey stone walls

enclosing many courtyards, and the surrounding buildings extend half-way down one street and half-way up another. The house is typical of many another wealthy home in this part of the country. We were ushered through an untidy entrance court, which oblivious gardeners seemed to have littered with the contents of the potting-shed, and were conducted into that part of the vast domain occupied by our hostess. The inner court, roofed over save for the sky well in the centre, was one of those singularly public places of audience, to which one grows accustomed in Chinese houses. The guest hall, occupied by the dining table, set in readiness with eight pairs of chopsticks, was indeed little more than a gigantic alcove with walls on three sides only. In the shadowy background, doorways hung with curtains led to more secluded apartments. The conversation was, as it were, conducted in public. Well-dressed little women, some to whom we were introduced, others who bowed politely but to whom we were not introduced, girls, children, servants gathered round. It was difficult to tell who were relatives, who were dependants. Our hostess, however, was of a different calibre. She had seen something of the great world beyond the gates of the "Gem-Hill City." In her dress and in her manners one recognised the influence of New China. Instead of the formal salutation, still customary in these parts, which ordains that one should draw up "broadside on" to the acquaintance whom one desires to greet, and then with folded arms bend forward with great deliberation, Li Tai Tai greeted us with a simple Western bow.

Being in mourning for her husband she must wear no silk for two years, but her simple well-cut "gwadz" of

dark blue material showed the dainty undersleeves and collar of white lace adopted from the dress of the once despised outside kingdom folk. A half-circlet of pearls adorned her glossy black hair. She was an attractive looking woman with her delicately featured oval face and ivory complexion—a face which her own countrymen might eulogistically describe as " beautiful even as a hen's egg," with " apricot eyes, good to look upon," a complexion like " congealed ointment " and " willow leaf eyebrows."

The " book of rites " ordains that " a lady visitor should think long before opening her lips "—a most convenient rule for a stranger in a strange land with a limited vocabulary, though, alas ! the advice suggests that the words, when finally uttered should be words of weight, an embarrassing thought under the circumstances. By seeking to cover silence with appreciative smiles, I bethought me of still another rule of etiquette : " Lady visitors must *on no account* show their teeth when they smile." I consoled myself by the reflection that our hostess must be too accustomed to barbaric foreign ways to take offence.

It is a happy circumstance that long pauses in conversation never appear to disconcert a Chinese hostess. The precept familiar to her from childhood that " if a woman's mouth is like a closed door, her words will become proverbial, but if like a running tap no heed will be paid to what she says," has no doubt been a restraining influence. It is evident that Li Tai Tai no longer " sits in a well and looks at the sky " (has a limited outlook). When deftly drawn into conversation by the sinologue of the party she avoids the usual commonplace topics.

The year of one's birth the number of one's sons, the price of one's clothes, the signification of gloves have no interest for her. She discusses rather the Presidential election, now postponed for the fourth or fifth time, the critical state of affairs in the country, the mineral wealth of China, and the ignorance and superstition of the people who refuse to let a coal shaft be sunk in the "Hill of Virtue" outside the city gates.

A buxom and lively cousin, preferring matters of more domestic interest, confided to us that she had seen outside kingdom folk in Shanghai with rings in their noses. "Was this painful?" she asked.

Li Tai Tai is said to be a leading spirit in that vast household. The "Li Gia" profits much by the natural ability and dignity of character of this quiet little widow with the passive dark eyes under the slightly raised eyebrows, eyes which see so much, yet apparently look out so calmly and indifferently on all things.

It is well that modern requirements no longer exact a blind submission to Confucian etiquette. The great master ordained that "no woman can be permitted to direct affairs or presume to follow her own judgment."

Li Tai Tai's only child is a girl. By legal right, however, the children of her husband's second wife are hers to all intents and purposes. The second wife was introduced to us but seemed disinclined to talk. Indeed her one and only contribution to the conversation at the table was an occasional eructation of painful intensity which, with true politeness (according to the old *régime*), should have been echoed by the guests.

As newly-arrived visitors we were, alas, obliged to accept the seats of honour, and to announce that we had

unwillingly appropriated them. The position is fraught with difficulty to Western barbarians, unused to the intricacies of Chinese etiquette. True! our deficiencies would be more easily pardoned in these days of change—when the over-elaborate manners of former times show dangerous signs of degenerating into no manners at all. There was small risk of this, however, in the "Li Gia," as long as Li Tai Tai held the reins of government.

The round table set for eight—the orthodox number—showed a quaint touch of foreign influence in the white tablecloth. It was only made of calico, but a cloth of any kind was a concession to foreign taste and not the only one. Usually a pair of chopsticks, a porcelain spoon, and possibly a miniature saucer, the size of a doll's plate, are all the implements provided for one's personal use during a dinner of many courses, with the result that as the meal progresses, a mangled heap of discarded sharks' fins, rejected sea slugs, lumps of sugared pork, and shavings of pig's stomachs, of bones and grizzle and green eggs repose before one in unappetising array—absorbing both spoon and saucer, and overflowing on to floor or table. Much to our silent approval our hostess at the end of each course—possibly out of respect for the white calico tablecloth—quickly handed our microscopic saucers to a serving-woman to be washed and returned.

In the long space of time which elapsed before dinner was served, we sat in an inner sanctum furnished in the so-called foreign style, with wicker chairs and harmonium, cheap photos and picture advertisements and the inevitable looking-glasses, which varied from a full-length mirror to a shaving glass. The empty tables, the curtainless windows looking out on a wall, the lack of rugs,

of cushions, and of books, deprived the room of any look of comfort. Some attempt had evidently been made to achieve the appearance of disorder, which in Oriental eyes a genuine foreign room always displays.

"How shall I arrange the furniture?" a new servant in a foreigner's house was overheard to ask. "Oh, that is of no importance," came the answer, "those outside kingdom folk like their things all in a muddle."

Conversation plays a very unimportant part at a Chinese feast. Too much talk on the side of the guests might be taken to imply dissatisfaction with the menu. Out of compliment to their hostess, their chief interest should be centred in the good things provided. The hostess meanwhile will probably observe the Confucian maxim, not to talk whilst eating except when addressed, and will busy herself in attending to her visitors' wants.

There are, however, sundry polite phrases on the part of the chief guests which should be uttered at various stages during the meal. The sumptuous fare being somewhat repellent to our Western taste was at times singularly difficult of disposal. In our eagerness to feign appreciation, we often omitted, alas, to place our chopsticks on the table as a signal that the rest of the party might do the same. According to rules, the other guests are not guests at all, but only "companions" to number one and two, and are, therefore, supposed to follow the lead of their so-called superiors.

When wet towels, hot and fragrantly scented, were brought round, the guests of honour, before proceeding with their ablutions, should admonish their fellow-diners to "slowly eat," whereupon they will courteously reply

"slowly sit." There was no doubt as to the "sitting slowly." The sedan chairs had brought us at 12 o'clock, it was past five before we made our farewells.

"Do sie, do sie" (many thanks). "We have wasted your heart," we say.

"'Keh chi' (you are too polite), I have treated you rudely?" replied our hostess, at which we again expressed our gratitude and departed, two or three paces at a time with intervals of bows.

Though to casual observers life seemed to be going on as usual in the "Gem-Hill City," and the streets appeared as noisy and as crowded as though a flourishing country fair were in progress, our friend of the willow-leaf eyebrows informed us that all was "ding buh ping-an" (truly not at peace), and she and her children, accompanied by other members of that large household, and bearing with them their pearls and their valuables, were contemplating flight. In a few days' time they would be starting on their way to the coast, and had already taken a house within the safe precincts of the foreign settlement in Shanghai, where they would wait till the trouble was over. "What trouble?" we asked, and she explained to us that most of the soldiers from the city and from many other towns in the province had been ordered to the provincial capital by the military governor, and would take up arms, if need arose, against the troops from the north, who were, though no one knew why, collecting in large numbers on the shores of the "Great River" (Yangste). With no one left to keep order, the robber bands, the hawks and the dogs (ruffians), infesting the countryside would soon fall upon the city demanding toll of the wealthy citizens. The "Venerable Great One"

would stay, but the ladies of the household, with their jewels, would be better away.

The day before our dinner at the "Li Gia" we had visited a Mandarin some hundreds of years old. The "Living Idol," the people called him, as they led us through the temple building, hidden amongst the trees at the foot of the "Hill of Virtue," into the inner sanctum. He had been famed during his life for his good works, and when, therefore, the day came for him to "descend to the sunlight of the nine springs" (Hades), it was agreed by common consent that his saintly body should be preserved in the most sacred precincts of the temple for all men to see and worship. Seated in a shrine somewhat raised from the ground, the withered form in faded robes sits as it were in contemplation like a follower of Buddha. By what chemical process the preservation of the body has been achieved, no one knows. Though the face is much shrivelled and the colour of the flesh resembles the colour of mud, there is something strangely human and almost beautiful in the expression of the features, so much so, that one's first scepticism as to the genuineness of the "living idol" began to waver.

CHAPTER XII

The Serpent Month

Thirty-six miles lay before us through the valley of rice fields, and across the low-lying hills to the river at "Yang Keo." In China a mile is not always a mile. Much depends on whether the road goes up hill or down, and in the province that we have just left behind a road exists which is a full eight miles in extent. Every one will tell you, however, that the distance is only six miles, and it is officially recognised as such. An autocratic mandarin of past days made the alteration to "gain his private ends." He had announced, namely, in public, that his daughter should not marry a man who lived more than six miles from her home. It so happened that a very desirable suitor appeared soon after, who resided, alas, at a place eight miles off. The mandarin, nothing abashed, soon settled the matter by changing eight into six in the official records, and the alteration has remained in force ever since.

The thirty-six miles, whether rightly reckoned or not, took more than eleven hours to accomplish, for soldiers were roaming the countryside in search of opium, and small shopkeepers who were wont to sell the smuggled drug to trustworthy customers, prudently professed to have run out of stock. The chair-bearers, deprived of their usual stimulant, had hard work to get along, and at last one poor wreck of humanity fell ill on the roadside.

There was nothing to be done but to get out of the chair and walk. Darkness was closing in as we stumbled along a narrow pathway, to the left of us a swamp of a rice field, and to the right a rushing river, gushing and foaming in the dark shadows below the fringe of bushes. The chair-bearers had forgotten the lanterns, had forgotten them on purpose, as we afterwards divined, so as not to draw down upon us undue attention from highway robbers. There were many gangs of them at work, and only three days before, they had attacked the sellers of rice in the market town, through which we had just passed. The soldiers, applied to for protection, had fired on the crowd, missing the robbers and killing some of the country people.

Nothing could seem more peaceful than the grassy sward under the spreading trees by the riverside at Yang Keo. It was as though we were walking over the springy turf of some garden lawn and, behind the trees, Dai Giao Si in the little mission house was waiting to welcome us. Not long, however, had we been safely inside the stone walls when the hubbub of excited voices broke the stillness of the night. A great mob had arisen, as it were, out of the ground and voices were clamouring either in fear or in anger. Shots rang out clear and sharp above the roar. From the upper windows we could see the green sward alive with hurrying people, carrying flaming torches and sweeping onwards. They had passed us by—so much was certain—and were moving along the river bank. We watched the lights dwindling and disappearing one by one.

"It was indeed well," said a police sergeant the next morning, "that the 'keh-ren' (guests) had got inside the

gates just in time." A gang of robbers, it seemed, had been the cause of the disturbance. They had made away with a neat little haul of several hundred ounces of silver stored in a boat near by, which was to have started that night down river. In spite of their pursuers, they had escaped unhurt. No one had been injured, except a soldier who had shot himself through the hand by mistake! The countryside was being terrorised by these bands of outlaws. Rice was scarce, and, indeed, there was hardly any to be bought except that sold by the Government authorities in limited quantities. Farmers in lonely country districts had still a certain quantity in store, but were afraid to bring it to market, knowing that it was more than likely to be commandeered on the way.

As to the police, we saw no more of them. Though their sentry-boxes remained at the corners of the streets, they themselves, having incurred the wrath of the residents, had sought sanctuary in a neighbouring temple.

This is the " Serpent Month," the fifth moon, according to old time reckoning, and on the fifth of the fifth moon China, young and old, turns out in force to look for the body of Ch'u Yuan, the patriot—in other words to enjoy the amusement of the dragon-boat race, and to fling offerings of rice wrapped in bamboo leaves, and cakes and sweetmeats into the water.

It is more than 2,000 years now since Ch'u Yuan, sick at heart over the ingratitude of his royal master, drowned himself in the Lo river. He left behind him an imaginary dialogue between himself and a fisherman. " Good people are scarce," he said as he stood by the water's edge, " the world is foul and I alone am clean. They are all drunk, and I alone am sober, and so I am dismissed."

"Ah!" said the fisherman, "the true sage does not quarrel with his environment, but adapts himself to it. If, as you say, the world is foul, why not leap into the tide and make it clean."

But Ch'u Yuan had chosen otherwise, and so, on the fifth of the fifth moon, since the year 450 B.C., the dragon-boats have been rowed up and down the river in search of his body, and the people have gathered on the banks to enjoy the fun of a holiday.

The fifth of the fifth moon has other associations besides those connected with the dead patriot. On this day, and not before, spring clothes may be exchanged for summer clothes, and the rule is strictly observed in many parts of the country. There are still more important matters to attend to on this particular date for is this not the "poison month"—the "Serpent Month"—and at the hour of noon on the fifth day, all reptiles will creep below the ground in a state of paralysed terror, and those, who are prudent, will smear a little yellow powder (consisting chiefly of brimstone) on their heads and faces in order to secure immunity from all poisonous bites throughout the summer.

Nor is that all, every careful housewife will sprinkle a goodly supply of lime on the doorstep, and in every corner of every room, by way of a precautionary measure. Was it not said that even the old Dowager Empress, she who now occupied the Dragon Throne on high, had always made a practice on the fifth of the fifth moon, at the fatal hour of noon, of dabbing this same yellow powder under her ears and nostrils.

The "rush sword" was even more important than the yellow powder. As we glanced through the open doors of

the houses by the riverside, we could see for ourselves that no one had omitted to hang up this strange green emblem. Here and there we stayed awhile, accepting the ever ready invitation to "please sit," and endeavoured to find out from the good woman of the house the hidden meaning of this unusual form of decoration. Dai Giao Si's dark eyes and ever ready smile won us much information, which otherwise would not have fallen readily to the strangers with the "devil's eyes" in the queer "devil's clothes."

Dai Giao Si's month was full of spring breezes, as they said, and she smiled like a bursting pomegranate. Her dark colouring won admiration denied to many of her countrywomen.

"Yes, I live in Yang Keo," she replied to one who was inquiring where her "honourable home might be."

"Can this be true? Why, I quite thought that you were a foreign devil."

"If you mean that I am one of the outside kingdom people, you are right," she answered, "but is it not written in your books Li do ren buh gwai?'" (nobody blames you for being too polite!). Whereupon there followed profuse apologies, for it was clear that this stranger from the West knew manners and customs and had "studied books" even as one of themselves; therefore, she must be treated with respect.

They were not luxurious, the houses in the market town of "Yang Keo," and many of them bore a strong likeness the one to the other, from the floors of uneven mud to the walls of even mud, which once in some remote past had been whitewashed. Narrow forms, a heavy-limbed chair or so, a table or two, and sundry oddments more appro-

priate to a lumber room than a sitting room represented the furniture. In the centre of the wall, facing the door, above an altar-like table, supplied with incense burners, hung almost invariably a full-length portrait of the heavenly mandarin.

"What were the rush swords made of?" we asked. Sweet flags chiefly and mugwort and garlic. "If you do not hang up mugwort on the fifth of the fifth moon you will not eat any new wheat this year," so goes the saying, but our friends in fear, possibly, of "eating a laugh," would not admit any superstition of this kind. True, it was thought that mugwort brought good luck. Besides which, it was a useful thing to have in the house, and made an excellent tea for the curing of indigestion.

"Chang-pu" (sweet flags) could be also turned to good account in the form of a lotion used for abscesses or sores. As to garlic, its virtues are many. One might almost write it up like a Western advertisement as efficacious in cases of sunstroke—invaluable in the laundry and finally excellent as a demon-preventative—a quality not to be despised in a demon-haunted land. Evil spirits are said to loathe the smell of garlic, and their taste in this matter, the inhabitants of certain islands of the sea would heartily endorse.

There were "floating words" that the dragon-boat race would not take place after all, though such a violation of approved custom had never been heard of before in the little town of Yang Keo, even during the first year of the new Republic, when all that savoured of idolatry had suffered a momentary rebuff. Those who marched with the times in the big cities of the coast were still inclined to look askance on those foolish festivities of

olden days, as being altogether out of place in an enlightened "People's Kingdom," but the influence of these advanced members of society was too slight a thing to penetrate far inland, and even in its own preserves was not always effective. Yang Keo had continued happily in the time-worn-ruts up till now. "It may be just shadow and echo talk!" said one. "Certain it is, however, that just now these 'tu fei' (brigands) are about the country, people fear to go out of the door."

"The rice, too, is scarce, and it is still three weeks before the harvest, and already," said one, "my house is like an empty jar hung up."

No, it seemed certain for one reason and another there would be no hunt that year for the body of Ch'u Yuan. One of the dragon-boats, long, painted, and narrow, lay at peace in its shed on the river bank, where it had lain for the last twelve months, and the water buffaloes grazed at ease on the grassy sward beneath the trees, unconscious of their good luck in being left undisturbed. But before long the silence was broken and an eager crowd of excited spectators gathered along the water's edge, yet there was hardly a boat to be seen, the broad expanse of water was practically empty, but the people were flocking across the narrow bridge and coming slowly towards us.

Behind them, on the opposite shore, dense clouds of smoke rose like a wall, blotting out trees and houses. Soldiers, slouching undrilled soldiers in bulging khaki uniforms, formed the nucleus of the crowd. They tramped past, looking good humoured enough, and those who tramped beside them showed nought but approval.

These military heroes, had, it seemed, just set fire to the entire village across the river. They were on their way from the city five miles distant to the provincial capital, and had received orders to execute this " deed of justice " on their journey through. True, many of the inhabitants of the village were innocent of crime, but amongst them dwelt families connected with the band of " tu fei," who had been making so much havoc throughout the countryside. There was nothing to be done but to " burn a mulberry tree in order to fry a tortoise " (make the innocent suffer for the guilty). A weird mediæval form of punishment for a republican government ! But in China where " nothing is but thinking makes it so " far less drastic in reality than in appearance, for as the soldiers sailed down river in their commandeered boats, the smoke died down with curious rapidity, and behold the village, though somewhat charred and injured, was still in existence !

In spite of the unrest in the neighbourhood, the disappearance of the police, and the scarcity of food, the daily round and common task in the little town of Yang Keo, seemed to go on much as usual.

One of the great industries of the place is the manufacture of " bitter cakes." All day long one might meet coolies with a goodly burden of this unattractive merchandise, slung at either end of his bamboo pole, bearing it forth for export. In the crowded precincts of the town where the open-fronted, open-mouthed shops seem to be yawning in each other's faces across the narrow strip of black and greasy cobble-stones, called by courtesy the pavement, the bitter cake stores are some of the most prosperous. They are round, plump and solid, these

cakes, the size of big scones, and are made, not of flour, but of manure.

Yang Keo also possesses a duckery, where just now 40,000 ducks' eggs are being hatched by artificial heat. The methods are even more primitive than in the chicken establishment at Shangteo.

To begin with, the eggs are kept in tubs filled with hot wheat, and the wheat itself is heated twice a day in cauldrons over a charcoal fire. Later on, they are spread out on wide shelves in the same shed-like building in which the tubs of hot wheat are kept, and in twenty-eight days, with no further attention whatever, the eggs are hatched. A small hungry-looking cat had been impressed into the service, and tied to a basket occupied by a newly-arrived party of downy ducklings, in order—they told us—to guard them from possible inroads of rats, and the cat apparently could be thoroughly relied on not to betray her trust!

On our return to the riverside, we stumbled unexpectedly upon a religious service. An elegant youth was busy firing off crackers, lighting candles, and pouring forth libations of wine on the gnarled roots of one of the old camphor trees near our gates. He had lost something, so much was clear, and was worried and distressed, but not averse from confiding in the "teacher sister" who spoke his own words even as one of themselves. Bit by bit the whole story leaked out. It was a *soul* that had strayed away, one of the three souls belonging to his brother, who, deprived of its presence, was now lying on a bed of sickness and would most assuredly pass away, unless the missing soul could be induced to return to its former habitation.

It was known that the last place in which the brother had been seen to linger before his final collapse, was here by these very trees. In any case, the sorrowing family had arranged to offer sacrifices at all the likely spots, with a polite request to the spirit to come back to its old home.

To cut a long story short, the elegant youth returned to his invalid, bearing with him *not*, indeed, the missing soul, but a generous supply of castor oil, which, as it happened, came to the same thing in the long run!

In some parts of China, by the way, though castor oil is frequently used for culinary purposes, no one realises its medicinal properties, the fact being that castor oil when *taken hot* may be enjoyed with impunity!

CHAPTER XIII

On the "River of Broad Sincerity"

It is often said that Japan owes most of her civilisation to China. From China came the written language, the classics, the artists, the kimonos and the umbrellas, but in one matter, that of her love of hot baths and personal cleanliness, I used to think, until I strayed into this province of Kiangsi, that the "East Sea Kingdom" had learnt nothing from the Sons of Han.

But here there is one district in which the common daily greeting is no longer "Have you had your rice?" but "Have you had your bath?"

True, there are writers who aver, in spite of much evidence to the contrary, that the Chinese have a high regard for cleanliness. Possibly this was true in the golden age of long ago, for history relates that in the Tang dynasty, more than a thousand years back, the salary of certain court officials went by the name of "bathing money" and was paid to them every ten days. There is also a record of a king (1766 B.C.) who has this suggestive motto inscribed on his bath-tub: "If you can renovate yourself one day, do so every day and for ever."

It seems typical, however, of things Chinese that one time *black* was considered emblematic of purity because, forsooth, it did not *show* the dirt.

In many of these Kiangsi towns, however, it is not

merely a matter of a motto on a bath-tub, but of hot water and plenty of it in daily requisition.

The dwellers on the banks of the "River of Broad Sincerity" have much to be thankful for.

They need not wash their babies with mud for want of a more suitable medium, as some of their countrymen in the north are said to do. Neither are they reduced to drinking hot water and calling it tea. Rice, fruit, vegetables, grow luxuriantly at their doors, and three meals a day is a common allowance, whereas in some of the less favoured provinces the poor man considers himself lucky if he gets two. Coal, which in Shensi costs 2*s.* 6*d.* a cwt., can be purchased here for 6*d.* or 7*d.*, and could, of course, be cheaper still if scientifically mined. As things are, it is scratched out of holes in the hillsides, and when the hole fills with water, the miner yields his claim without a protest and seeks another. Moreover, for the little clay "wind stoves" of the natives, coal dust is more in demand than coal lumps, as the former, mixed with earth, is found to supply all the heat required at an almost nominal cost.

On one of our walks abroad at Yang Keo, we came across a gigantic rubbish heap. The rubbish consisted chiefly of knobs of coal discharged from the baskets of coal dust which were being carried to market.

Thirty miles or so from Yang Keo, lies the large and important "City of Broad Sincerity," on the banks of its namesake river. The trade in "bitter cakes" is now no more, and the people busy themselves with the tea trade and with the manufacture of paper.

Much of the tea most highly prized by the Chinese

comes from this Kiangsi province, possibly the "Dragon well tea," and "Lao Tzu's eyebrows tea," and other blends, the poetical names of which I have forgotten, and few outside kingdom folk can appreciate to a nicety the differences of flavour which to a Chinese mean so much.

The old Dowager Empress always kept a supply of honeysuckle blossoms and rose petals with which to season the national beverage.

"Tea makes the mind more lucid," goes the saying, and pillows stuffed with tea leaves are good for the eyes.

The "City of Broad Sincerity" prides itself on being a literary city of renown. The college, the finest in the province, lies amongst its wooded gardens, looking down from a superior height on to the brown-roofed houses with spreading eaves which, crowding along the river banks, seem to be pressing forward in order to get as near to the water's edge as possible. The suburb outside the city walls is as large and important as the city itself. A bit of a moat remains, thickly covered with lotus leaves, fishes' umbrellas, as the people sometimes call them. The "arrow root" made from the lotus is the best in the land, so excellent is it indeed, that, as long as the "Son of Heaven" occupied the Dragon Throne, a certain quantity of it had to be sent to the palace, year after year, for his consumption.

The only mission house in this big city was, until a short time ago, one of the brown-roofed, low-walled buildings standing in a crowded street jambed against the city wall. But the old residence, with its darkness and malarial germs, has been given up now for a new

foreign house, bright, light and spacious with deep balconies and a non-malarial upper storey. Money goes a long way still in China, and comfortable family residences, with wide verandahs, glass windows and polished floors, can be built for something under £400.

Our hospitable friends, who lived within its walls, still kept to the Chinese dress, so necessary from all points of view in the early days of pioneer work. Many amongst their people had never seen foreign clothes as worn by outside kingdom women. They surveyed us with interest, but not with admiration. With true Chinese courtesy, however, they kept their disapproval to themselves till afterwards, and one or two even essayed a compliment.

"The foreign dress (made of muslin by the way) must be 'ding hao' (very nice) in the winter time," they suggested, "for did not the belt round the waist keep one warm?" They could understand the same reason for the wearing of gloves, but that any person in their senses should wish for gloves in the summer wholly surpassed their comprehension.

Curiously unattractive many of us must seem to them.

Our bold ungainly walk is of all things repulsive to a people brought up to consider a mincing gait as a mark of breeding and respectability!

Their criticism of one pretty golden-haired English girl showed the difference of taste. She is not bad, they allowed, but her blue eyes are enough to give one a fright, and her yellow hair reminds one of the straw mats we kneel on in the church!

"No one is a saint in the dog days," goes the Chinese

saying. An unusually hot spell has come upon us prematurely, and even the chairs and tables, the books and papers, are hot, damp and sticky, and the mosquito, "playing on his silken strings" in picturesque Chinese phraseology, hovers around us by day and by night digging in a dart whenever opportunity offers. Experts can tell Mrs. Anopheles with her malarial bacilli from the others, but to the ordinary mortal all are equally unpleasant, and one marvels at the philosophy of the Chinese poet who pleaded for mercy on their behalf :—

"Oh, spare the busy morning fly,
Spare the mosquito of the night,
And if their wicked trade they ply
Let a partition stop their flight.

"Their span is brief from birth to death,
Like you, they bite their little day,
And then with Autumn's earliest breath
Like you they too are swept away."

Fortunately the boats on the "River of Broad Sincerity" are of a far more comfortable type than those on the Tsien Tang. No longer is it a case of sleeping in a species of small tunnel, the common property of passengers and crew. We have now a kind of upper deck all to ourselves, raised some two feet above the bottom of the boat and, thanks to curtains, it is invisible to the boatmen. Here the mats, forming the roof and walls, can be pushed back and larger air spaces opened out. The steersman at the stern stands on a sufficiently high level to look *over*, instead of being obliged to look *through*, as in the Tsien Tang river boats. As our craft slips rapidly down the swollen current to the next halting-place, the landscape changes in character. The rice fields are

scarcer and terra cotta hills, like inverted sugar basins of monster size, form the leading features. This red "Devonshire" earth, which is much used in the world-famed potteries near the Po Yang lake, is now to be a familiar sight. Round about the "City of River Mouth" there is a lonely bit of breezy moorland, called Scotland in jest, and some scraps of green bog amongst rocky hills, dark and gloomy, nicknamed Ireland, which make one forget for the moment that one is in China, till, descending once more to the level rice fields on the land side of the city, one catches sight of the red ochre walls of a temple, and the oil-cake seller in his cotton cloth garments of corn-flower blue drowsing on the temple steps. The beating of gongs and the loud wailing of mourners' voices in the background remind one of the haunting horrors of the crowded streets so near at hand, where death counts for more than life, and where one old woman, who mattered little to anybody while she was living, appears now to have been well enough off to leave a substantial sum of money to the Taoist priests, so that all things may be done decently and in order to facilitate her journey into the land of shades. She has been dead now for three weeks, and on and off the priests have beaten their gongs and chanted their prayers, and have kept the candles burning, in order to light the soul upon its way, for in the region to be traversed all is darkness.

How long the "golden peck" (coffin with a corpse in it) will be kept above ground only the priests and the geomancers can tell—they who must "seek the dragon and mark his lair" (find a lucky spot for the grave). "The happy man," say they, "finds a happy burial place." *The wealthy man* would be nearer the truth.

Occasionally people find it convenient to forget the presence of the dead in their homes. Only the other day an old man who "saluted the age" (died) thirty years ago, was borne forth at last to his grave on the hillside.

Coffins and funerals are expensive items, and sometimes, but rarely, these things can be dispensed with. Not very long ago, in this same province of Kiangsi, a family took counsel together as to the most expedient way of checking the dissolute career of the younger brother who, by his evil deeds, was bringing disgrace and ruin on the household. No blood should be shed. They desired no vulgar brawl, but justice should be meted out quietly and swiftly, and before long the offending youth had been buried—buried alive under the kitchen floor!

The cruelty practised, every now and again, between those who are nearest akin, is almost incredible to a Western mind. In the "City of the River Orchid" we used sometimes to pass a young man groping his way along the high-walled lane at the back of the house. In his early days he had been addicted to thieving. The father, in despair of effecting a reform by any other means, chose the only certain remedy he could think of, and throwing lime in his boy's eyes, blinded him for life.

It was a relief to get beyond earshot of the priests' gongs and the chanting, into the quiet garden behind the mission house—a garden of luxurious growth, of American apples and Chinese peaches, of loquat trees with their bunches of golden fruit, of grapes, green and purple, ripening in the sunshine (unlucky from a Chinese point of view because their branches point downwards), of bushes of tiny lemons, of broad-leafed fig trees, and hairy-

stemmed palms, from the fibre of which the common folk make their picturesque waterproofs. Everything seemed to thrive, and one could not but deplore the fact that so little is done by the sons of the soil in the way of fruit cultivation.

Sweet smelling green orchids and the white gardenia blossoms gave a sleepy exotic fragrance to this Chinese garden.

At the "River Mouth City," for the small sum of eleven dollars (22*s*.) a boat, large and agreeably new and clean, was hired to take us to the capital, a fortnight's journey, allowing for many halts on the way (some 270 miles of actual travelling). But though it may not cost a great deal of money to live in comparative comfort on the shores of the "River of Broad Sincerity" those who, for the sake of that which means more to them than life, have made the place their home, often pay a heavy toll in the matter of health and strength.

For two days, damp, hot, enervating, lifeless days, we stayed in the city of Iyang, one stage from our last halt at "River Mouth."

The house of our hospitable entertainers, wedged in between the crowded street and a high bank at the foot of a steep hill, seemed to be gasping for air. Everything was open that could be open, but the tiny courts down below bleaching in the sunlight, and the tiny rooms upstairs, squeezed in under the low roof, were almost hot enough to be on fire.

The little guest hall, stowed away at the back and out of reach of the sunshine, was perhaps the coolest spot in the house. From it the open door led on to a damp ditch,

between the house and the bank, in which the milk and the butter and the pudding were reposing in a minute trickle of water, in other words, a microscopic spring, and a veritable godsend to the housekeeper in summer weather. The commissariat department in the great heat presents many difficulties, some enterprising souls wearying of tinned milk and tinned butter, have attempted to keep a cow, a more complicated matter in China than at home. After generations of unmilked predecessors, the creature is often singularly averse to the operation, and one famous specimen in this part of the country refused to yield a single drop of milk until the kitchen tongs had been forced into her mouth, at which point, instead of kicking and biting and otherwise protesting against the proposed treatment, she chewed away at the tongs and all went well. One unlucky owner who had removed the calf somewhat prematurely, was obliged to have an artificial one made to take its place, and used for the purpose a genuine calf skin stuffed with straw.

In some of the large cities where foreigners congregate, the Chinese start dairies on their own account, and have many ingenious methods of increasing not the number of cows but the supply of milk. Bean curd, for instance, is a useful ingredient which adds richness.

One wealthy and exceedingly particular client, wishing to run no risks, requested that the cow itself should be brought to her house and milked on the spot. Day after day the animal appeared on the scene, and the bottles of milk enjoyed by the family were pronounced excellent.

One fine day the cow arrived as usual, but the man whose duty it was to superintend the milking was away ill.

"Why does not some one else milk the creature?"

inquired my lady, but no one offered. The bottles of milk, however, were there as usual, and then at last the true story leaked out that the cow which appeared every day in the foreigners' domain was but a figure head, and had no direct connection with the milk consumed in the household.

Another customer sought, on one occasion, to verify his suspicions. "Lao ban," he said, "you have been putting *dirty* water in this milk!"

"Indeed, that is not so, the water was well water and absolutely fresh," came the naive answer.

Side by side with the humble mission premises in the city of Iyang stands the "cathedral," as it has been called, so large and stately is the edifice in comparison to all other buildings round about. A point of especial interest is that practically all the funds for the erection of this fine church were supplied by the Chinese Christians.

Those who in these restless days oppose woman's rights, and suggest, much as Confucius suggested, that "woman is subject to man and may not presume to follow her own judgment" should pay a visit to the work that has been organised entirely by Western women on the shores of the "River of Broad Sincerity."

"A woman's power," as Ruskin puts it, "is for rule, her intellect is for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision," and here they have ruled supreme for some twenty years or more, teaching all who were willing to learn, the secret of life and inculcating a new lesson that:

"In blessing we are blest.
In labour find our rest."

Up and down the river in every place of importance the

"Hall of Good Tidings" is open to all who come. There are schools for the children, houses for the despised old women, and dispensaries, where wonderful foreign medicines are to be got for a few copper cash, or, if needs be, for nothing at all.

Even the proud Confucianists, who "walk by on the other side," reluctantly admit that those who have truly "eaten of the foreigners' doctrine" practise virtue, in holding faithfulness and sincerity as first principles, even as the "Great Master" himself has avowed.

It was a pity, thought some, that a "Good Tidings Hall" could not be started amongst the west country people whose wild doings were the talk of the countryside. These unruly neighbours belong to a fierce tribe living but thirty miles off to the west. Some of them come now and then to the town and can be recognised by their fine physique, and by the fact that their women, taller and bigger in every way than the usual Chinese women, always wear skirts. A year ago a fight had broken out amongst the different factions of the tribe, and sixty or more had been killed. As a judgment for their iniquities, so said their peaceful neighbours, wild animals had lately appeared in their midst creating much havoc. They were not tigers they said, for with tigers they were familiar, but these ferocious creatures possessed manes like horses,* and had carried off and killed one after another, so that a great fear had fallen upon the people.

Rice was very scarce just then in the city of Iyang. There was hardly food enough for five more days, so said the authorities, and that only for those who could pay for it. Some few, seeing nothing ahead but starvation, had

* It was suggested they might be lions.

chosen an easier death at their own hands. The robber bands, knowing that most of the soldiers had been summoned to the capital of the province, had waxed bolder, and the village people lived in a state of continual anxiety.

Thieves and robbers are recognised evils in China at the best of times. There is even such a person as an "honest thief," meaning one who is registered in the book of the local king of the thieves, the "Ma Kwai," who up till almost the present date has enjoyed a small official post at the Yamen, and who, if the man wanted happened to be a genuine, *i.e.*, an honest thief, could generally track him to earth and find some way of making good one's losses.

Thieves are silent marauders, scooping out holes in mud walls, burrowing underground, and resorting to other rat-like methods. Occasionally they burn some strange kind of powder by the beds of their victims which acts as a sure and certain, but perfectly harmless, soporific. Robbers, on the contrary, follow the opposite line altogether, and the more noise they make the better!

Some years ago our hostess all but met her death at the hands of one of these turbulent groups.

Late one evening she was alone in the house save for a serving-woman. Hearing a great commotion below stairs, and knowing by the sounds that robbers had broken in, she hastily flung from the window into the garden some packets of silver just received for the purchase of property. Hastily descending the stairs she planned escape by a back door, seldom used, which the serving-woman had orders to unlock. The woman, however, had misunderstood the command and the door remained fastened. As her mistress hesitated at the entrance of the guest hall a crowd of brigands, waving their long

poles above their heads, swooped down upon her. By a lucky chance the poles were unprovided with the sharp knives usually fixed at the points. A powerful blow on the head almost felled her to the ground. She swayed and thought she must fall, and it flashed across her mind that this would mean certain death. With a superhuman effort she stood her ground pressing against the wall, and fighting back with her arms the blows which now fell thick and fast. Blood was flowing from her wounds, and she knew that she could not hold out much longer, when suddenly an unexpected diversion arose, and a faithful Chinese helper, hearing the hubbub in the street, dashed forward to her assistance, hurling chairs and forms and anything he could lay hands on at the robbers, eleven men or more, who, with one accord, turned upon him striking with their sticks. He fought desperately, but the numbers were too strong and defeat seemed certain. Already he was seriously hurt, his head gashed open, his arms bleeding, when help of a strange kind arrived from an unexpected quarter. Two citizens, passing along the street, had looked in to see what all the noise was about. They carried their lanterns with them as do all respectable Chinese when out after dark. At the sight of the lanterns, the innocent paper lanterns, the robbers looked at each other in alarm, and with a hurried muttering, turned precipitately and fled. It leaked out afterwards that the characters inscribed on the lanterns happened to be the same as those of the then resident official at the Yamen. The peaceful citizens had all unconsciously saved the situation and been mistaken for Yamen underlings, the advance guard possibly of a band of Yamen soldiers.

Land for a better and more healthy house for the "teacher sisters" in Iyang is difficult in these days to buy. No suitable site is in the market. The purchase of freehold property is often a complicated matter in this country where "things are not what they seem." Should one buy a field in which there happen to be some fine trees, it is somewhat disconcerting to discover, after the money has been paid over, and all things satisfactorily settled, that the trees belong to some one else and probably are not for sale. In one case I remember, some fine camphor trees were held to be the joint property of all the surrounding landowners, because, from their position near the riverside, they were of great use in preserving the banks in time of flood.

Taxes, fortunately for the individual taxpayer, though not for the country at large, are incredibly low. There was a time long years ago, when strenuous efforts were made to increase the public revenue, and an Emperor of the eleventh century hit on an ingenious method of levying an income tax. Those who made a false declaration were fined the exact amount understated, which sum was divided between the Government and the informers, the Government taking the lion's share. Needless to add the new system lacked the approval of the people, and therefore was soon rejected as unworkable.

It is said to be a fundamental law in China that the *land tax* must never under any circumstances be increased. In Yang Keo, however, I remember a case in which, without injustice to any one, it might have been considerably *decreased.*

In the farm in question a part of the fields had been washed away into the river, and still the authorities

continued to collect the tax which the farmer continued to pay, choosing no doubt the easiest and cheapest course, as tax gatherers, in this land of uncertain laws, are kittle kattle folk to deal with.

In the "Honourable River City," our next halt, the fame of the "Good Tidings Hall" had spread through the countryside, and there were few who had not heard of its large schools for boys and for girls, its almshouses and its dispensary. North, south, east, and west it is rare to meet a well-educated Chinese girl who does not owe, at all events, her early education and training to a mission school.

Superstition dies hard, and even in these enlightened days Chinese professors will often decline to hold their classes in rooms on a lower floor to those occupied by the girls' dormitories. It is deemed unseemly that a girl or a woman should be placed on a higher level to a man and *walk* over a man's head even though it be only a case of upstairs and downstairs. Fortunately for old prejudices most of the mission schools are one-storied buildings, which simplifies matters.

During our stay in the "Honourable River City" we strolled out to the open country, after the steaming heat of the day had somewhat evaporated, and climbed up to a bit of moorland ground somewhat higher than the rest, dotted with grave mounds. Disputes had arisen lately because the "teacher sisters" had purchased a piece of land to add to their little cemetery, a corner of which happened to be higher up on the hillside than a grave already some years in existence. The family of the dead

man buried therein strongly protested, and pointed out that all prestige for the dead relative would be at an end if a "mere woman" were buried upon the same hill on *a higher level*. To keep the peace no objection was made to the shifting of the boundary stone, and all was now in order.

Some twenty-five miles from the "Honourable River City" lives the Taoist Pope, "Heaven's Teacher," as he is called, a descendant of the famous Chang Tao Ling, who "ascended to Heaven at the age of 123," and who "had acquired power to command the wind and the thunder and to quell demons." It is 1,700 years ago and more since the temple was built, and ever since that time the office of high priest of the Taoist Sect has been a perquisite of the family of Chang.

Pope Chang LXII. still occupies the seat of honour, though, during the reaction against idolatry in the first year of the Republic, he was deprived of his office, and the Roman Catholics, who are powerful in that particular neighbourhood, helped in the work of destroying the images.

Lately, however, he has been reinstated and now holds court as usual amongst the pilgrims who, at certain seasons of the year, come to worship at his feet in their hundreds and their thousands.

The temple is situated in a beautiful spot on the "Dragon Tiger Mountain," amongst magnificent trees and rippling springs of cold clear water, and within the temple walls thousands of covered pots in rows inspire the pilgrims with awe, for does not each pot contain a demon, condemned to perpetual confinement by the magic powers of the "Great Wizard." On the first day

of every month he gives audience, so the people say, to an invisible host of gods and demi-gods who come to present their compliments.

As the river neared the region of the fearsome Po Yang lake the landscape changed in character, and one could well have imagined oneself to be in the middle of Holland in flood time, a Holland in which green rice fields had taken the place of grass land, and the windmills had turned into pagodas or were missing altogether.

We halted for the night at Shwei Hong, a mere tongue of land, consisting of a muddy street wedged in between the river and the lake, and here the boatmen requested a meal of pork and vegetables with which to fortify their courage and propitiate the gods, so that the next day's journey might be accomplished in safety.

Nanchang Fu, the capital of the province, lies just off the lake on the shores of the Gan River.

For three miles or more the tangle of brown-roofed houses, and brown-hooded boats, brown masts and muddy water, and brown steps climbing the muddy river bank made a somewhat sad-toned picture, as viewed from the interior of our boat slipping down with the current. Quaint brick towers, wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, like small squat pyramids standing on their heads, cropped up at intervals near the water's edge, and were used for extracting lime from the blue stone, evidently an extensive industry.

The drab-tinted picture was but the brown husk of a city resplendent with life and colour. In the haunts of the wealthy merchants the streets were not wide, the houses were not clean, and the pavement between them

was black, but the air of prosperity was unmistakable. In the ever-moving throng, consisting almost entirely of men, spotless white garments were the order of the day, and those who eschewed white wore for the most part silk gauze or crêpe of delicate and exquisite tints, soft blue and silver grey, or pale saffron, and the grimy houses were forgotten in the blaze of gilded shop signs and lettered scrolls, rose-pink and turquoise-blue, gold and purple, which formed the background to the passing crowd of gaily clad pedestrians. The windowless shops packed with rich stores of silk and jewellery, the sedan chairs and the wheel-barrows of those who wished to ride, the streets of mud, and the grime and the smells are all typical of Old China, but the new order of things is breaking through here and there, and near the beautiful lotus lake, not far from the college with its famous old library, stands a modern building fitted recently with electric plant of costly description, and close to it is the Provincial Assembly Hall, bran new and substantial, but without the usual concession to supposed foreign taste in the shape of a large clock face, minus a clock, *painted* above the gates.

One wondered what weighty matters were being discussed within those walls or whether, like the Mother Parliament in Peking, the majority of the members were amusing themselves elsewhere.

These are critical times, for has not the Governor of the province, after summoning most of his troops to the capital, suddenly departed incognito, carrying away two million dollars.

There are many "floating words" of coming trouble, but "those who know do not speak, and those who speak do not know."

As to Provincial Assemblies, and for that matter the Peking Parliament as well, one is reminded of the words in the old song: "I won't let you play in my yard if you won't be kind to me." Deadlocks are constantly arising because, forsooth, one political party refuses to meet another, or the Nationalists in electing seven representatives, so hurt the feelings of the Democrats that they have left in a body. As to the Cabinet Ministers, no one keeps his post long enough to find out the extent of his duties. Like children, playing a game of musical chairs, they are for ever changing their seats and dropping out one at a time.

The old and the new have sat down contentedly side by side in Nanchang. Beyond the crowded streets, and the dirt, and the smells, and the dandies in their exquisite silken garments, we are borne in our sedan chairs to a fine European building standing in well-kept gardens of mown lawns and trim shrubberies, and here we are greeted courteously by one of the famous women of New China—Dr. Kahn—a product of an American Missionary Society, educated partly in the States, and a most able surgeon and physician. She conducted us over the up-to-date wards of her woman's hospital. The whole place was as spick and span as any similar institution in the home lands, particularly commendable this in China where the tendency to neglect detail, to let things slide, to ignore the stitch in time, is the everlasting and not unmerited reproach.

The "cha buh do" (nearly), the "buh yao gin" (it doesn't matter) are at the root of so much that hinders progress.

At the other end of the city the old pagoda, built to obstruct the escape of good influences, still stands. Many

of the steps of the stairway within are broken, but the stout old walls have long years of life before them. From the weird holes near the top we could see another sign of the new era out in the open country—military barracks, built in foreign style, large and imposing.

Enterprising citizens have many profitable schemes on foot. A few yards from a "pure dwelling" (Buddhist monastery), in which priests, draped in the orthodox red vestments, are chanting prayers over the coffin of a wealthy client, efforts are being made within the walls of an industrial institute to turn out European furniture in modern style. There is a great demand in these days for upholstered armchairs and writing tables and so forth, but those who cater for the Chinese market have realised two things, that the price must be low, and the colouring bright. We are shown with pride a library chair, the leather back of which is a brilliant purple, and the front a vivid green, price 14*s*., springs and padding included, though the latter leaves much to be desired. These are great days for foreign goods, either real or imitation—some of them figure under patriotic names such as "Love, the Kingdom Cloth," "The Patriotic Hair Clippers," etc. One thinks of the time, not so very long ago, when the Emperor of China in writing to the English King made use of these words: "As your Ambassador sees for himself, we possess all things, and set no value on objects strange and ingenious and have *no use* for your country's manufactures!"

In those days, and until a very few years back, a traveller across the Po Yang lake journeyed by native boats, and in stormy weather would often take three

weeks in the transit. Nowadays, in a steam-launch, thirty-six hours suffices, during six or seven of which the little vessel lies at anchor fearing possible accidents in the dark, for the lake, owing to the suddenness and terrible violence of its storms, is looked upon with considerable dread. Though nominally 100 miles in length and some thirty broad, the mud flats through the greater part of the year take up almost as much space as the water. At times one might have fancied oneself to be steaming along some broad yellow river with flat mud banks. Our rickety little launch, made in Japan, had suffered considerably from Chinese neglect. The windows were half broken, the doors would not shut, and when a storm came on, the roof of our cabin leaked so badly that it would have been easier to have tackled the rain outside on its own ground, than inside on ours. An appeal to the *compradore* brought to the rescue a man with a duster. He mopped assiduously and succeeded not in arresting the progress of the drips, but in diverting their course. "If seven men with seven mops mopped it for half a year," our plight would have been equally pitiable as long as the rain continued, but fortunately the weather cleared.

"When three men walk together, there is something to learn," goes the Chinese saying. As we steamed past the imposing modern fortifications at Hokeo, a place of great strategical importance near the mouth of the lake at the entrance of the "Great River" (Yangtse), we might have gathered, if we had but possessed sufficient knowledge of the language, much interesting news relating to coming events from a little knot of grave-faced men, who at the last stopping-place had bade farewell to a jubilant young officer.

CHAPTER XIV

"Fire Medicine" *

From the heights of a blue mountain between the Yangtse river and the lake, we looked once again upon the scene of our steam-launch journey. In the sunlit haze at the foot of the hills, the Po Yang lake lay like some enchanted world, remote amid the peaceful shadows of soft mauve and heliotrope that hovered here and there over the ridges of golden sand, in and out of which, silvery streams and the wide pools of a summer sea glittered in the light.

A land of dreams and "summer afternoons," so would it seem from the heights of the blue mountains, but, alas, this was not so!

Early in the water-lily moon (July) the booming of cannon, only a few miles away, had given the first signal that the "war to punish Yuan" had commenced.

The "missing" Governor with the two million dollars was, as it turned out, one of the leaders, and there were many good men and true who, though loth to resort to arms at this unpropitious moment, were at heart in sympathy with the cause.

They had, as it were, hatched the republican eggs hiding the wee chickens under their wings, only to find that their nurslings had turned into ducklings and were swimming away into miry, stagnant water black with the refuse of years.

* Gunpowder.

" Injustice breeds injustice, curses and falsehoods do verily return always home, wide as they may wander." " Yuan," said his antagonists, " would never have been President save for those who had brought about the revolution," and now " all the birds had been shot, the bow was put away in obscurity " (he was ungrateful for services rendered). Small wonder that the discontent, simmering so long, had boiled over.

" The Commander of all Forces demands the dismissal and trial of Yuan Shi Kai and his associates for murders, and illegal and unconstitutional misdeeds," so ran the proud declaration of the avenging troops, but from the first the " Commander of all Forces " was doomed to failure. It was merely a question of the longest purse, and Yuan, with his lately acquired foreign loan of £25,000,000, could defy, with impunity, half the Du-Dus * of China.

" We will fight for which ever side gives us most rice to eat ! " said one of the soldiers.

The heavy guns roared, and the maxims rattled at the foot of the mountains for the best part of three days. Reports poured in of the killing of the wounded, and of the non-burial of the dead; of the desertion of the villages and the destruction of the crops. Sad little parties of refugees, men, women and children, labouring along under the heavy bundles that contained most of their worldly goods, toiled up the steep path from the plain below to seek refuge in the recesses of the mountains. Three hundred or so half-famished soldiers, a remnant of the defeated southern army, chose a less

* Du-Du = Military governor.

frequented way, and crossed over Nankang Pass and down to the shores of the Po Yang lake, for rumour reported that the "punish Yuan army" would make another and firmer stand at the Hokeo fort.

When, however, a week or so later, as we passed down the very road where much of the fighting had taken place, the rice fields and the vegetable fields, green and untrampled, were smiling in the sunshine, and never a trace remained of battles, great or small.

The first outward sign of the victorious northern army was in the form of a meek and mild sentry standing under a tree at the edge of a field, and above his head he had rigged up a yellow oil-skin umbrella to protect him from the sun.

True, in the little villages near by, the owners of the houses and hovels had fled to the mountains, and the northern soldiers were installed in their stead.

Our little party, which had consisted of three to begin with, had now grown to some thirty odd, most of them harmless peasants, who despite the fact that they had "passes" of their own, preferred to make assurance doubly sure, and slide by the dreaded northern outposts under the shelter of privileged "outside kingdom folk" who possessed a permit from the general, and had a fleet of fearsome "pao chuan" (gun boats) out on the river.

The sentries were more wide awake than they appeared to be, and turning to see if our stragglers had got through safely, we beheld one poor unfortunate seized roughly by the collar and forced to the ground to open his bundles for inspection.

In Nanking, the city had, so report said, turned with scarcely a murmur to the southern side. The general in command had adopted a truly Oriental mode of procedure Inviting the leading officials of the city to meet him at the Yamen, he courteously requested their views on the situation. Most of them doubtless scented a rat, only one had the temerity to admit that his sympathies were on the side of Yuan Shi Kai. The interview at an end, he bowed his way out and, passing through the ante-room, paid for his courage with his life.

From beginning to end the story was ever the same— "Great thunder and little rain" (much cry and little wool). The amount of ammunition spent in Shanghai, and other places made a great deal of noise and brought forth comparatively few results. Instead of breaking up the walls of the Shanghai Arsenal many a shell fell harmlessly into the water of the creek. Soldiers firing away steadily in Chinkiang, but chiefly into the air, said that they did it to " frighten the enemy " (" giao tamen hai pa "), besides which, was it not the best way to keep up their own courage ? And no soldier was called on to give an account of the ammunition used.

No Chinese troops care much about battles out in the open or in the daylight.

Other methods appeal to them more strongly.

Northerners, pursuing a fleeing force of the " rebels," as they were called, saw ahead of them a bit of forest land, the trees hung with tiny lanterns. They congratulated themselves on their good fortune. Evidently it was here that the enemy had encamped for the night. The northern troops stole up cautiously, completely surrounding the wood. In another moment they would be

masters of the situation, but in another moment they had discovered their mistake. The wood was *empty* save for the lighted lanterns, and the "rebels" attacking from the rear caused a panic in their ranks and turned the pursuers into the pursued.

Not far from that same spot the wily southerners once again came off successfully. Arriving at a small country town one day in full retreat, uniforms were discarded, and merchants and coolies were persuaded to change places with the soldiers. By the time Yuan's men appeared on the scenes they found no sign of fleeing warriors, but business going on as usual and the shopkeepers doing a thriving trade. It was evident that the "rebels" had not passed that way. A few moments breathing space and "a change came o'er the spirit of their dreams." The shopkeepers turned as if by magic into soldiers, and fell upon their unsuspecting enemies, killing and wounding.

Meanwhile, the city of Nanking held out bravely against long odds. Chang Hsuan, of monkey-like physique, who, by several turns of fortune's wheel, had risen, so went the report, from the lowly position of groom to the old Empress Dowager to the highly-honoured post of Tartar General under the Ching dynasty, had come back to the place from which he had been ousted in the revolution, resolved, so it was said, to leave not a dog or a fowl alive, but the job was not so easy. There was at least one brave regiment within the walls which fought to the death, and in the end was practically wiped out.

REPUBLICAN TROOPS ON THE PURPLE MOUNTAIN (NANKING).

REPUBLICAN SOLDIERS MARCHING INTO NANKING.

Chang Hsuan's men, large, loose-limbed northerners, clad for the most part in coolies' blue cotton clothes and still wearing the Manchu queue, could fight with knives and swords better than with rifles. Besides which, they had a great aversion to dynamite, and when, on one occasion, the northern artillery battered down one of the largest of the city gates, and a way was clear to enter, they hung back, loth to run the risk of being blown to pieces by the mines within. That night the plucky defenders patched up the gates again, and for a while the siege continued. It was a forlorn hope, however. Finally Chang Hsuan agreed to talk peace, and even went so far as to give a promise *that when he entered the gates* there should be no massacre of the people, no looting of their possessions.

The promise was kept in Oriental fashion. For three days of terror, the exbandits and the trained soldiers of the northern army plundered at will the helpless city, but on the fourth day Chang Hsuan himself *entered the gates* and the looting ceased!

Eye witnesses describe the scenes of horror of those three days of license—the band of young girls driven by sword pricks to the camp outside the walls; the fate of the bedridden woman who, when ordered to get up and show them where her money was kept, told them that she had none, and that for years she had been unable to stand upon her feet, and she cursed them for their unseemly behaviour. The soldiers, laughing, cut her in pieces bit by bit beginning at the feet—a slow death, but in the end it was sure.

In their lust for gain, men seized the rolls of cotton cloth and threw them down in the mud when they saw

something better. Finally they grew fastidious, and would only burden themselves with silks and furs.

Money and jewellery were always the first quest, and they grew practised in the discovery of these, finding treasures hidden in buckets of night soil and buried in the gardens. They threw down pails of water in doubtful places, and wherever the water disappeared quickly, they shrewdly guessed that the earth or the stones in that particular spot had been recently disturbed.

Chang Hsuan's soldiers were no respecters of persons.

Within the city lived a family connected with the President himself, and on friendly terms with more than one of the northern generals. The head of the household escaped by a "layer of skin," hastily disguising herself as one of the serving-women. She sat under cover of a loaded rifle whilst the looters tore up the floors and smashed the furniture, appropriating whatever they fancied, but searching in vain for the jewels. "She is only a servant," said one; "never mind her," and the loaded rifle was reserved for a bigger job. Seeking for hidden treasure, they smashed open coffins, turned over jars of wine and oil, drove their spears into brushwood, and under beds, piercing the flesh of those who were hiding there, and carried off all the warm clothing and the bedding they could find, even the treasured sets of burial clothes stored against the day of need by a poor old dame whose tears trickled down her cheeks as she told us of her loss. A loss she would never now be able to repair, and which might, for all she knew, make the next world a very bitter place to live in.

"I shall never forget it till I have no teeth," said a younger woman, one of those who had hidden behind the

brushwood, but had escaped injury, on condition that she and those with her stood without moving whilst the soldiers took what they pleased.

Though more than a month has passed since the end of the siege, the city is still like a city on strike. Most of the shops are shut up, and but for the soldiers and beggars there would be few people in the streets.

Here and there some humble food store has opened its doors once again, but many others are afraid to follow suit, for the soldiers commandeer their goods, or dog the footsteps of any likely purchaser, demanding from the helpless shopkeeper a share in the profits.

It is true that some thousands of smart Tientsin police have been sent by Yuan Shi Kai to keep order. Along the four miles of road from the station to the city they stand at intervals of fifty yards, but like all Chinese police are loth to interfere with other people's business. A filthy beggar, chasing after my rickshaw, butts into the fifth rib of one of these guardians of the peace. Surely now the headlong career of my persecutor will be arrested, but no, the policeman looks upon the collision as part of the day's work, and the beggar, rebuffed for one short moment, soon returns to his lawful prey.

" It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good," and the rickshaw coolies and others of their ilk have " struck oil " of late. Many of them have acted as guides to the houses of the well-to-do, receiving in return for their services, portions of loot, and in many a mat hovel and mud cabin priceless treasures have been " warehoused " till their new owners were in a position to reclaim them.

Business, in these unhappy times, is mostly conducted

at night in the " black market," and here, in these haunts of mystery, disposers of stolen property, and all who desire to avoid public notice, make their bargains.

One piece of work, and only one, has been put in hand without delay, and that is the manufacture of new city gates, and the repairing of the walls, from which half-embedded shells are still projecting, too high up to remove.

On October 10th, the third anniversary of the " People's Kingdom," the inauguration of the President is celebrated in the stricken city. From closed houses and beshuttered shops the " five coloured " flags are hung forth. But those signs of rejoicing are deceptive, for the flags, it seems, were forced on unwilling purchasers by the soldiers.

Four days ago in the northern capital Yuan Shi Kai achieved his own election to the Presidency by equally masterful methods of a somewhat different nature, and in a country that is outwardly at peace, a reign of terror is in progress.

In one city, supposed to be in sympathy with the defeated southerners, no fewer than 250 people—men women, *and* children—were put to death during the short space of four weeks, guilty or innocent, it was all the same. A small boy, humming a snatch of a spirited " rebel " song, which he had often heard sung by the troops on their way to Nanking, was hauled off to the shambles and cut to pieces. A man standing near tried to protect him, for was not the boy his son ? " If you are his father we will have you killed too," said the soldiers, but the crowd gathering round intervened. " The man was no relation at all ! " they protested, and

the soldiers let him go. An old woman on her way home from market had purchased more fish than usual "Come now," said the soldiers, "that is more than you can possibly eat—you must be going to feed the rebels"; so they seized on the fish, and, to save trouble, killed the woman on the spot. It was a crime to hum the rebel song, or to say one to another that "Things are not peaceful"—it was almost a crime to live. Men were shot for this and shot for the other, sometimes thirty a day; and, bit by bit, those who remained lapsed into silence—the silence of despair, of utter helplessness. For the time being they had no other way. "Would that there had never been a revolution and a 'People's Kingdom'" said one, "if all our rice is to be diseased!"

Shanghai and other cities are plentifully provided with "eyes and ears" (spies), some of whom are women. As in the days of the French Revolution, "one can be suspect of being suspect," and queer stories are told of mysterious disappearances and arrests of the innocent as well as of the guilty. At a dinner party in one of the provincial capitals the host was suddenly called away by a friend, who must speak a few words on an urgent matter of business. He would return shortly, but the evening passed, the guests departed, and still he did not come back. Early the next morning his anxious wife, hearing disquieting rumours, repaired with all haste to the Yamen for information. A Yamen underling forced into her unwilling hands two dollars and a blank piece of paper! With a cry of terror she realised the significance of this strange offering.

With it she had to buy tin-foil money to burn upon her husband's grave.

"Then show me his coffin!" she cried.

"Impossible," said the man, "for there are two coffins. We know not which is which."

And his crime? Well, nothing was proved. He was "suspect," that was all, and a friend of those who had wished to punish Yuan.

Now and then the "suspect" is a girl. More than one has been discovered travelling by the railroad to Hangchow with hair elaborately dressed, not over a frame, but over a bomb, and another young "woman," in a delicate state of health and in a most unfit condition to travel, turned out to be a youth, who had resorted to this ingenious, though disgusting method of concealing, not one bomb, but several.

How will it all end? Young China has expected "an egg to crow" and to hurry things on too quickly, but certain it is that some of the ablest men in the country have gone under in the conflict, and those who remained have "retired into the forest."

"Better be a dog in peace than a man in anarchy," say the Chinese, and "All anarchy, all evil and injustice is, by the nature of it, dragon's teeth—suicidal, and cannot endure!" says Carlyle.

History repeats itself, but in these days there is no Duke of Shao to give his master a timely warning.

"Where are your gossipers now?" said the Emperor Li Wang (870 B.C.) to his minister, the Duke of Shao, after summary execution of suspected slanderers.

"All you have brought about," came the answer, "is a screen which prevents you from learning the real

sentiments of the people, but you should know that it is more dangerous to shut the people's mouths than to stop the waters of a river."

It was considered peculiarly unlucky that on the fifteenth of the eighth moon, on the very night when so many people in all parts of the country had prepared their paper shrines with flags and red candles and incense sticks in honour of the moon goddess, and had spread a goodly feast of sweetmeats and fruits and moon-cakes for her and for the household out in the open courtyard, that the dreaded dog should choose that night of all others for his evil pursuits.*

As his black shadow crept further and further along, blocking out the light, the air was rent by the explosion of many millions of fire crackers, almost deafening to mortals, and loud enough in all conscience to frighten away the foe. Besides, as they knew by experience, this means of prevention had never yet been known to fail.

Before so very long all was peace once more, and up and down the street devout worshippers set fire to stacks of tin-foil money, killing thereby "two birds with one stone," as this would not only please the moon goddess, but provide pocket money for the spirits of the ancestors.

The moon-cakes—the size of small buns, filled with musty almond paste—the melons and other dainties were decorated with rough designs representing either a rabbit, or occasionally a toad, for of the seven precious things of which the moon is composed, it is said that in the centre stands a three-footed animal not unlike a toad,

* The Chinese consider that an eclipse is caused by a species of dog that is trying to eat up the moon.

but some maintain that the figure in the moon is nothing but a " jade rabbit " compounding medicines, and others say that it is only a woman.

The task of the court astronomers, in the old days, was certainly no sinecure. An imperial edict of those times (2159 B.C.) announces that, " When the astronomers give notice of an eclipse too soon, let them be put to death without any forgiveness, and when after the time, let the same thing happen to them."

Cheng Ki Tung, the famous statesman of modern times, tells a picturesque story of the goddess of the moon. She promised an old woman a gift of her own choosing. The thrifty soul put her hand to her mouth and kept it there, indicating that her great desire in this world was never to be without food. Alas ! what was her horror the next morning to find that during the night she had grown a beard of extensive dimensions, for the moon goddess had altogether mistaken her meaning.

CHAPTER XV

Combed by the Wind and Washed by the Rain

In another three years, said the Belgian engineers, the "fire-carriage" would go all the way to Si An Fu, the capital of Shensi, which now is called by the Chinese a "wilderness place," but was once upon a time the chief city of China. The Republic, in the first flush of enthusiasm and the self-confidence born of inexperience, had risen to her feet after the revolution and desired to build her own railways. True, the money did not disappear in station-master's salaries before the stations had been built, as is said to have been the case in Szechewan, for the simple reason probably that there was next to no money to be had. Finally, therefore, and very sensibly, Belgian engineers, backed by a substantial Belgian loan, were permitted to take the business in hand for the Chinese Government.

Already the "iron-road" had penetrated some eighty miles or so into the wide tract of loess country which lies between Honan Fu and the border of the province—a comparatively treeless region, a land of dust and sand and grit, the colour and much the consistency of Fuller's earth.

It had been a dry season, and though every level spot was sown with winter wheat, the tips of the blades above the ground were so thickly plastered with dust that hardly a speck of green was to be seen; nothing to relieve

the dead monotony of the drab-tinted earth, nothing except a patch of golden scarlet persimmons, ripe and over-ripe, spread out for sale, on trays or in shallow baskets, at rare intervals by the wayside.

But the road itself was not monotonous, one could wish it were more so. Owing to the vertical cleavage of the loess soil, this land of dust is broken up into ravines and gullies, into cliffs and terraces, and here and there the face of a cliff, dug out and fitted with a door, serves as a dwelling-house.

The road is often little more than a deep and sandy ditch, wedged in between high walls of caked sand, and only wide enough for a single cart, but there is much traffic on this narrow highway, merchandise from the far west, from Thibet, from Central Asia, skins, drugs, grain, and cotton and tobacco, and over and over again the unwieldy carts, with their animals loosely roped together by ropes attached to the axle, are hauled up at a dangerous angle on precipitous banks, the occupant is unceremoniously tipped back, feet in the air, whilst amidst shouting and clamour, much cracking of whips, and words, and colliding of iron-bound cart wheels, and a seemingly inextricable tangle of kicking mules and jibbing horses, of knotted ropes and excited muleteers, further progress is again made possible, no one knows how, and the caravans from the east and west pass each other by, and fall back once more into silence.

The carts are without springs, and without seats, and when the deep ruts tumble over into holes or climb up on to fallen rocks, the unhappy occupant clings like a drowning cat to any available support, and presses back into the bedding, with which a vain attempt has been made

to turn the cart into a kind of padded room. Otherwise, he will be flung from side to side without mercy, and bruised and battered and buffeted. As it is, not a few unpleasant encounters with the unyielding woodwork, and much shaking of nerves and bones is inevitable.

There are agonising moments, generally in or near a village, when the roadway is littered with boulders, and great heaps of loose paving stones. Can this be an abortive attempt at road mending? Alas, no! Rather the reverse. These stony beds, over which the iron-bound wheels (411 lbs. in weight) are grinding and scrunching, whilst the animals plunge, and the cart rocks and shivers, merely signify that the wall of a house has tumbled over at this particular spot, years ago possibly, and has *been allowed to remain.*

To put up cheerfully with the inevitable is certainly commendable, but to submit with equal cheerfulness to that which could well be avoided is to a Western mind an irritating trait in the Chinese character.

In the dry season of the year we travel day after day in a dense cloud of dust—fine, insidious, powdery dust of loess soil. It lines and plasters our faces till we look more like corpses than living folk, it forces its way into our mouths till we are literally "biting the dust." It powders our hair, and gets into the tins of jam and butter, covering them with grit. It mingles with the potted meat, adding a fresh flavour, and collects in drifts of sand on our rugs and cushions. It hangs like a veil before our eyes, and haunts us even in the inns at night.

The inns of this country of "yellow earth," as the Chinese call it, are little more than dust themselves, dust

and water; in other words, *mud*—low one-storied buildings of dry mud round a yard of wet mud! They are more adapted for beasts than men. The paper panes are torn off the windows, the hinges are broken on the doors. There is often no attempt at furniture over and above the inevitable "kang," a raised platform built of mud, under which a smouldering fire of mud and manure can be provided, should one require such a luxury. One sighs for the hot baths of Kiangsi, but here even a "wash face basin," as they call it, of fresh water from the inn kitchen is all one can get, and sometimes even that must be bought from a tea shop some yards down the street. At the best it is seldom unadulterated, for small particles of the ubiquitous dust are swimming on the surface. Honanese do not complain. "A Honan man," goes the proverb, "never washes his feet unless he fords a river!" The bedding, extricated from the dust-lined carts, emits a smothering cloud of powdery loess as it is flung down on the "kang."

With time and a spade one could dig up the mud floor and make it level, but the Chinese prefer it undulating, as this forms a better *sink*.

They have picturesque names for their inns. "The Hotel of Accomplished Wishes," "The Inn of Heavenly Origin," "The Pearl that Illumines the Night."

At the "Illuminating Pearl" we arrived late. Other "keh" (guests) had taken the best rooms, and we must be content with little more than a mud "kang" and a rubbish heap inside four stuffy walls, and to get to this unsavoury hole it was necessary to go through two other "sleeping apartments" already fully occupied, in one of which the landlord himself lay snoring.

The early start, often in the dark hours before the dawn, was possibly a blessing in disguise. Daylight might have disclosed unpleasant details in our surroundings which, the "eye ne'er seeing, the heart ne'er grieved." "To rise so early in the morning seems to be a foolish Western practice," said Li Hung Chang, but on these road journeys in China one has no alternative. Neither carters nor travellers wish to be benighted on lonely roads not unfrequented by bandits.

Old Chang, my elderly servant and a local product, was evidently too accustomed to the general filth of the inns even to notice its existence.

All things considered, he was more of a hindrance than a help. He blackened the tea cloth and broke the crockery. He stole some spoons from an inn, thinking they were mine (fortunately they were only made of tin), but sought to propitiate me with offerings by the way, pressing on my acceptance with his dirt-begrimed fingers, a sweet potato just baked. "It's not cold," he said, meaning it was hot, or a persimmon, ripe and red. "It is not bitter," he said, meaning it was sweet, and wondering at my unwillingness to "chih" (eat). On one occasion he bought me the leg of a chicken, ready cooked, for the small sum of one penny, and showed it me triumphantly reposing in his unwashed hand. When recooked in butter, however, it was quite palatable. Fortunately, there were always "old eggs," *i.e.*, hard-boiled eggs, to fall back on.

"Tung Gwan is the lock. Si An the key. Peking the treasure," goes the saying, and a spur of the Tsingling mountain range makes a natural fortress between the

province of Honan and that of Shensi. The narrow road, like a deep trough, worms its way between the high cliffs, climbing slowly, through beds of loess sand, over the mountain pass.

Tung Gwan, the lock, was taken and retaken time and time again during the revolution. Three provinces, Honan, Shensi, and Shansi, meet at this point, and the Yellow river, some 500 yards wide, flows past the city wall, flows somewhat sullenly, for in these days no one propitiates the river god with handsome brides. Long ago, when the neighbouring states were at war with each other, custom demanded that some beautiful maiden be thrown into the yellow waters as an offering to the god, and this sacrifice never failed to bring prosperity to the countryside.

There is no love lost between the people of Honan and their neighbours, and at Tung Gwan, the border city, one prepares to step, as it were, into a new country.

The Honanese are hot-tempered, conservative, rough and uncompromising in manner, and, though distinctly intelligent, are very material in their tastes.* The people of Shensi, on the contrary, possess less marked characteristics, and are, in fact, a mixture of many types, owing to immigration in the past from five different provinces.

Up till now, travelling as we have been, in old-fashioned Honan, most of the people have worn their queues in true Manchu fashion, and the copper coins (10 cent pieces) of the "great illustrious (Manchu) dynasty" have been more in favour than those of the New Republic. As a further point of difference between the two pro-

* Yuan Shi Kai was a Honanese.

vinces, the gauge of the ruts in the sandy roads have been adapted to Honan carts only.

At Tung Gwan, the border city, every axle of every cart must be changed to suit the new conditions.

How is it, one asks oneself, that these sons of Han, the teachers of the world, as they might once have been called, are still content, exasperatingly content, to travel along these rutted tracks, called by courtesy roads, in carts without springs and without seats. One reason suggests itself as now and again we come across some fellow traveller. He lies asleep, regardless of the bumping and the buffeting, blissfully unconscious of the humps and the holes as the iron-bound wheels plunge into the one and over the other. He can see no cause for complaint, not at least as regards personal comfort. Neither will he recoil from the filth of the inn when he gets to the end of the day's journey. He will squat at ease on the mud "kang," and enjoy to the full the savoury dishes of vermicilli and pork and vegetables, which are brought by the unsavoury underling from a black and greasy cook-shop down the street.

Later on he will sleep the sleep of the well-fed, undisturbed by the crawling of the insects, the braying of the donkeys, the stamping of the mules, the yelling of the carters, which continues through the greater part of the night, as the men go to and fro amongst their animals, feeding and watering them.

To undress and redress by the dim light of a wick floating in a saucer of oil, half of which is trickling down the mud wall and emitting an evil smell, will be no great hardship, for the simple reason that he takes off nothing but an upper garment, which is soon replaced.

Though the plain of Si An, through which we are now travelling, is still composed mainly of the same old loess soil, a greater supply of water and different climatic conditions considerably alter the face of the landscape. Trees, mostly thinly-attired willow trees, stand, with many gaps in the line, along the side of the road, which is no longer a mere ditch wedged in between high cliffs, but has widened out and is sprawling like a strip of ploughed upland across limitless fields, green with sprouting wheat and other crops.

The Si An plain, some 90 miles wide and 200 miles long, is famous for its fertility. Maize and millet, and wheat and hemp, vegetables and cotton, and many kinds of fruit grow there in plenty, but, alas, to cultivate fruit trees properly takes too much time and care for the Chinese, who appreciate, above all things, quick profits, besides which, they see nothing wrong about the flavourless pears and peaches or the undersized cherries. In the good old days of Kublai Khan, the Emperor himself planted trees, and his subjects followed suit, for it was popularly supposed in those happy times that the planting of trees lengthened the life of the planter. One is almost sorry the superstition has died out. The pine and the cyprus, moreover, were looked upon as great blessings to mankind—a tonic made of the flowers and sap conducing to good health and long days. The dearth of trees in some parts of China is distressing. Now and again a philanthropist makes an effort to improve matters. In the province of Shansi, on one occasion, sacks of acorns were presented to the people, in the hope of forests of oaks at some far distant date, but the recipients, with an eye to the present rather than

the future, used them without the slightest compunction for the feeding of their pigs.

Things have so changed, alas, since the days of Kublai Khan, that on the road to Si An tree murderers are at their evil deeds, and here and there the bark has been peeled from a well-grown trunk, and the tree is slowly bleeding to death.

What a senseless proceeding ! Nay, for the perpetrator of the mischief is in need of timber and a *live* tree may not be cut down on the public highway, but a *dead* tree—ah, that is another matter !

The milestones along this Shensi road are massive, tower-like erections, squat and square, some twenty feet or so high.

Once upon a time they marked the trade route across the Empire every ten "li" all the way to Turkestan. Now only comparatively few are left, and in some parts of the country they have disappeared altogether.

" In spring keep warm, in autumn keep cold, and you will never be ill," runs the Chinese saying. There was no difficulty certainly in keeping cold in that Si An plain. As we passed the great stone bridge, a third of a mile long, over the River Wei, the sleet that had been driving in our faces all day turned to snow, and the willows in their scanty attire shivered in the icy wind which swept pitilessly across the open fields. In another seven miles or so we were in sight of the famous " walls of gold " and Si An Fu, the city of " Western Peace," but names go by contraries in China, and few cities in all her vast domain have known less of peace and more of war.

CHAPTER XVI

The City of Western Peace

Si An was for many years a royal city, the greatest in the land. Wu Wang, the martial, who lived about the time of Samuel, was the first Emperor to make it his capital. Some nine hundred years later Shih Huang Di, the Napoleon of China, reigned there in state. It was he who built the great wall and burnt all the books. There are villages not far away which bear in their names traces of that deed of tyranny. "The Hamlet of the Paper Fire," "The Village of the Heap of Cinders," and still the field is pointed out in which those 450 luckless scholars were buried up to their necks in earth, and ploughs driven over their defenceless heads. This tyrant, not unnaturally perhaps, was haunted by a fear of death, and, with the idea of improving matters for him in the next world, the underground palace, about one and a half miles in extent, which formed his tomb, was one of the most costly undertakings ever put into execution. A roof of azure blue represented the sky, the bronze floor, "set" with miniature rivers of quicksilver, resembled the earth. Walls were inlaid with precious stones and, in accordance with time-honoured custom, the ladies of the Imperial harem and all the attendants were buried alive with their dead master. As a protection against thieves, deadly machines, like automatic archers, were placed inside the entrance. The

Emperor's tomb is said to be the original site of Aladdin's cave in the "Arabian Nights," the legend having been carried back to Arabia by the Arab traders in the days of the Tang dynasty. Not a vestige now remains of the underground palace. Indeed, history relates that before the end of that same dynasty the great conqueror's tomb was destroyed. People still point out the place that it occupied on the hillside near the sulphur springs of the little town of Lintung, some seventeen miles from the east gate of Si An Fu, and doubtless the "fountain of clear water," where Aladdin and the magician sat down to rest on their way to the cave, is the original spring now utilised for sulphur baths and enclosed in picturesque bathhouses.

During the centuries of anarchy in the days of the three kingdoms our "City of Western Peace," being one of the important strongholds of the day, again passed through troublous times. For a while, however, a period of calm intervened under the great Tai Tsung (627—650), who, instead of burning books and burying scholars, built a famous library, and encouraged, not only art and learning, but the religions both of the East and the West—Nestorians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Mohammedans, all enjoyed the protection of this broad-minded Tai Tsung. Chang Su, his Empress, is one of the famous characters of Chinese history. On her deathbed she aspired to no priceless tombs or rivers of quicksilver, but said: "All I desire in my coffin is a tile for my pillow and wooden pins for my hair," and, looking at those who stood around, she continued, "Associate with the good and shun the company of the evil." Some years later a second public burning took place in the environs of

Si An Fu, not of books this time nor of scholars, but of the fine clothes and rich jewels of the palace ladies. Henceforth, only the Empress was to be allowed to wear silk and satin, and the silk factories were closed throughout the land. This reign of economy was short-lived, however, and the same frugal court grew into one of the most extravagant, though, at the same time, one of the most brilliant of the day, until, alas, came a repetition of the old story so often met with in the annals of Chinese history, that of a beautiful concubine, a powerful eunuch, and an execrated minister with "honey on his lips and in his hand a sword."

In the eighth century the Thibetans sacked the city of Si An. In the ninth century a terrible religious persecution took place, in which the Nestorians disappeared for ever, but the Buddhists, owing to their vast numbers, revived again in time. During the tenth century rebellion reigned throughout the land, but little more is heard of the "City of Western Peace" till the closing days of the Ming dynasty in the seventeenth century, when the rebel Li captured the place, giving his soldiers three days license to do whatsoever they pleased within the walls. For three months Li defied his enemies in the old capital, but the Manchus came off victoriously in the end, and stationed within its gates one of the largest garrisons of banner-men throughout the land. But even they are now no more, and Si An Fu, the "City of Western Peace," covered itself with shame in the cold-blooded, merciless massacre of the descendants of these same banner-men three short years ago.

Not a house, not a hut remains, not a vestige of the wooded gardens which were once the pride of the Manchu

quarter—nothing but a dreary tract of land, broken by sandy hollows, and barren ground littered with stones. The hollows are many of them graves—300 dead bodies in each according to regulations. Ten thousand or more had been massacred, so said report, but some had died another way. They had sought to hide in the caves, of which there were not a few within the precincts of that Manchu city; but dead bodies had been thrown in on top of them, blocking the outlet, rotting as they lay, and burying alive, in the most horrible way imaginable, the living souls within. A mere remnant had escaped—no one quite knew how. Some few hundreds were eking out a meagre existence at an industrial institution established for their benefit. One used to wonder what they felt like, these poor survivors who had gone through the reign of terror, who had lost their all, who had, as it were, come back to life to find their friends and their families and their homes all swept away, and of all the Manchu city nothing left but graves.

A "sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!" but to outsiders they seemed remarkably passive; nay, almost content. One asked oneself, was this placidity owing to a "laugh face shell" (mask), or did they, luckily for themselves perhaps, lack in imaginative power?

The "walls of gold," some ten miles in extent, are chiefly made of mud and bricks, but, being forty feet high and forty feet wide, are still as strong and formidable as they were in the days of their youth, nearly a thousand years ago. One does not wonder then, in this land of euphemisms, that they should have acquired so proud a

title. The gates, north, south, east and west, crowned by lofty towers, punctured by tiny windows (in one tower alone there are forty-seven windows), are the finest in the land, finer even than those in Peking.

We, who came from the east, passed under the "Portal of Eternal Happiness," the last of the three great gates, divided the one from the other, as it were, by long slanting "hyphens." At this busy moment of the day, not long before the hour of closing for the night, it would seem as though some big scrimmage were taking place. Carts, bullocks, mules, horses, and wheel-barrows have apparently all got entangled together in a medley of rope harness under the dark tunnelled archway. The carters are yelling and cracking their whips, the coolies are shouting and edging their way through with their burdens, hurrying pedestrians are brought to a sudden standstill jambed between the wheels and the mules. Sellers of cakes and other oddments press up close to the walls, and continue to cry their wares even in the clamour and the clatter. Everybody shouts at once, giving advice to everybody else and uttering imprecations.

"You grandson of a tortoise!" says one.

"You rabbit!" comes the still more abusive rejoinder.

What will the end be? Broken bones and stampeding horses, and carts smashed to smithereens; nay, for this is China—the greater the noise the less the damage. As by magic, our animals suddenly extricate themselves from the *mêlée* and, when once on the other side of the "Gate of Eternal Happiness" all is peace. The street that opens out before us is of such immense width that, in spite of the crowded traffic ever oozing from the narrow precincts of the archway, the general impression is one

of emptiness. To either side of us, dwarfed by the immense width of the road, are long lines of low buildings of the "coach-house and stable" style of architecture. In reality they are beshuttered shops which, with a few exceptions, are still awaiting occupants. Some day it is hoped this will be a prosperous business quarter, but at present the people have hardly grown accustomed to doing their marketing, or setting up their wares, in these once sacred precincts of the now defunct Manchu city. Glance behind those brand-new buildings and behold the desolate tract of stone littered-ground and the hollows filled with dead.

The very timber that has been used in the building came from the Manchu gardens, and, being green wood wholly unseasoned, is already beginning to show ominous signs of unfitness.

Times are certainly changing, and in this modern street of Si An the houses are all of the same height, which fact alone would once have been considered extremely unlucky.

Near the busy centre of the city the "coach-houses" have turned one and all into open-fronted shops, the stock-in-trade of which is leaking out on to the sidewalk in true Chinese style, and already dust and neglect have dispelled the idea of new wood and shining varnish.

The picturesque "bell tower," with its padoga roof, in which a great bell, some ten feet long, sounds forth the hour both day and night, is 500 years old or more, and stands at the centre of four cross-roads in the middle of the city.

Under the archway, sellers of clothes, old and new, are utilising the walls for the display of their goods, for this

is a free country! Garments, blue and grey and black, occupy, like Academy pictures, every available bit of wall space on both sides of the road. Overhead, in the top loft of the tower, hangs the bell, and in a corner of the bell-loft behind a frail partition, live the bellringers. "One servant," goes the Chinese saying, "will carry two buckets of water. Two servants will carry one bucket between them, and three will *buy* water."

So has it been in the case of the bellringers. Once upon a time one custodian of the bell tower was considered sufficient, later on, two were supplied, and now a third has been added to the staff to buy vegetables for the other two, and there is no one sufficiently disengaged to ring the bell! On the day of our visit the hour of three had struck some moments before on the clock of cheap German make, the proud possession of the bellringers, and suggestive sounds of yawning issued from behind the partitions, but why disturb oneself for so small a matter? "It is better to sit than to walk, it is better to lie down than to sit, and still better to sleep than do either," so goes the Chinese saying. O, ye sons of Han, you have waked me too early; I will slumber again. It is not part of your training to be faithful in a few things; and this slackness in small matters is the curse of the country.

If by any unlikely chance, however, a citizen had listened for the pealing of the bell he would not have been disappointed. Some rollicking young soldiers, following in our wake, flung the log of wood, suspended on a beam and supplied for that purpose, once, twice and thrice against the sonorous metal.

Si An Fu was once a city of superb palaces, of splendid

theatres and sumptuous sepulchres, and now it has long ceased to be royal and has become bourgeois. The princely halls, of olden days inlaid with jade and pearls, have left no trace behind. In their stead the low brown-roofed houses of the " mai mai ren " (shopkeepers), with their mud and plaster walls squeezed up alongside of each other, so that one wall serves for two houses at the very least,* remind one of the way in which the people themselves, all over the land, are linked together by their family clans, their multitudinous guilds, their almost innumerable secret societies.

The main street from the bell tower in the centre of the city to the gates of " Assured Peace," leading to the west, is paved, but alas, the paving stones are at every kind of an angle, and sometimes missing altogether. To ride over them in a city cart is to undergo physical torture, and at the end of the journey every internal organ seems to have been momentarily displaced.

Many of the busiest thoroughfares are still left in a state of nature. A dry mud bank constitutes the side-walk, a wet mud ditch rising into lumps and falling into holes does duty for the road. In wet weather, water, black or brown, as the case may be, fills the ditch and a slippery, shining " chocolate " paste covers the banks. There are places where bank and ditch become one, and subside together at the bottom of the water. The unlucky pedestrian, drawn up suddenly in his halting progress, wonders if he shall wade through the black slush, which will probably be nearly up to his waist, or ride across on unsavoury two-legged steeds, in the form of filth-clogged beggars, hung, rather than clothed, in

* In Si An detached houses are almost unknown.

vermin-haunted rags, who are anxiously waiting to be hired. A farthing, or rather its equivalent in cash, is all the payment required.

When seen from the top of the city walls in winter time, Si An is one wide sea of roof tops crouching under a pall of dust. The gaps between the houses are filled in by ailanthus trees, with dusty leafless branches. At rare intervals a picturesque tower with gracefully tip-tilted roofs shoots up high above the squat houses, like a slender brown tree in a garden of bushes.

The ailanthus is the "tree of heaven," so called because it seeds itself everywhere, and grows with the freedom and persistence of a weed. In America they call it a pest, but here in this sparsely-wooded land, where more valuable trees have disappeared by fair means or foul, the common ailanthus becomes a godsend.

Though in residential streets and by-roads and back lanes the keynote of the city is dry mud of a khaki tint, the busy thoroughfares are glorified by rich splashes of colour against a background of dark woodwork and gilded shop signs, the cornflower and periwinkle blue of the men's garments, with sometimes a gay addition in the shape of leggings of apple green or saffron yellow, the poppy red or petunia pink of some small child's gala attire, the crimson lanterns swinging above the open-fronted shops, the carts with hoods of royal blue and vivid green, the piles of oranges, the scarlet persimmons, the red chillies, the porcelain vases and jade ornaments, and other curios spread out upon the ground—all add touches of rich colour to the scene.

At street corners, and wherever men congregate, open-air restaurants carry on a surprisingly prosperous trade.

An artist would delight in the picturesque colouring of these tiny food stalls. A tidy housewife would revel in the ingenious way in which there is a place for everything and everything in its place. So surpassingly excellent is the fare provided, that many a well-to-do epicure will linger in passing, for a meal at one of these *alfresco* dining-rooms.

In democratic China the publicity of the affair and the mixed company matters not a jot. Two round red lacquer boxes (like mammoth hat boxes), decorated with paintings of full-blown peonies, form the basis of the erection. The table—a wide slab of wood—rests upon these boxes, and the covered jars and elegant bowls of dark blue and white porcelain down the centre of the table contain delicacies of various descriptions. Low lacquered forms accommodate the guests, a basin and a pair of chop sticks are placed before each, and a good square meal can be purchased for fivepence or sixpence, whereas most of the diners contrive to feed well on a far less extravagant sum ! Savoury dishes from a cauldron on a charcoal fire at the corner of the table are dished up hot and steaming as required. In the deepening twilight the glowing charcoal of the stove, and the rays of a crimson lantern overhead throw a warm and cheerful light upon the scene.

Later on much of the paraphernalia will be packed into the two boxes with the peonies, and the whole establishment will depart for the night.

There is still an Imperial City in Si An, but it consists of a wide tract of grass land surrounded by a half-ruined wall and entered by a fine old archway. A rough-hewn block of stone, which " fell from heaven," stands in the

far corner, and on it the impress of a hand is still plainly to be seen—the hand of the Empress Wu, the autocratic usurper of the Dragon Throne in the seventh century, who, calling herself divine, pretended that her supernatural powers had given her control even over the plants. Artificial forcing was resorted to by the court gardeners, and the flowers brought to her Imperial Highness at the critical moment. One day, alas, some recalcitrant peonies refused to respond; orders were given that henceforth and for ever the cultivation of peonies should cease.

The Empress Wu lived before her time. She ordained that men and women should have equal rights, and threw open examinations for official posts to the weaker sex. Whether the scheme proved a failure or too great a success is not clear. All we know is that it was promptly abolished by the next Emperor.

The privileged occupants in these days of the Imperial City are sheep, not Manchu sheep, nor Chinese sheep, but Mohammedan sheep.

"Ten Peking slippery ones cannot talk down one Tientsin brawler, ten Tientsin brawlers cannot talk down one Mohammedan," so goes the saying. A large and flourishing colony of this assertive race dwells in the north-west quarter of the city, the descendants, so they themselves declare, of some 3,000 Moslem soldiers who came to China during the eighth century at the request of the Emperor to *propagate their religion!* In those days the Mohammedan Empire was enlarging her borders. Persia, India, Thibet, all in turn appealed to China for assistance against their Moslem invaders, but before long we hear of an Arab embassy knocking at her

own doors and rumours of an Arab invasion, but, owing partly to Chinese diplomacy, and partly to the opportune death of the Arab general, no actual invasion took place, and those who crossed the border came in peace and not in war, and, marrying Chinese wives, they settled down for good.

It is said that they "dwelt peaceably in China, tranquillising the state."

In these days there is no love lost between the Moslems and the people of their adopted country.

The aggressive, somewhat overbearing Mohammedan character irritates the more lethargic Chinese, and various sayings in common use show the opinion held by the latter with regard to their Moslem neighbours. "Ten Mohammedans, nine thieves," and "One Mohammedan travelling will grow fat, two on a journey will grow thin," meaning that when they think that none of their co-religionists are looking they will call pork "mutton" and eat it with enjoyment.

Outwardly, however, the Chinese treat them with the respect which most of us would accord to a fierce-tempered watch-dog, and though they do not approve of Moslem sheep feeding gratis on "imperial" grass, interference is considered inadvisable, for it is best to let sleeping dogs lie.

The Mohammedan quarter is an unattractive part of the city. Down one street and up another the unmade roads consist of deep drifts of dust in dry weather, and deep bogs of mud in wet weather, lined by walls to the right, walls to the left, endless mud-coloured walls, punctured by closed doors and innocent of windows, and now and again one catches sight of roofs of some more pretentious building which suggest a mosque.

Those whom we pass—they are invariably men and boys, for Moslem women are kept within doors more carefully than Chinese—wear peaked caps of white calico. Otherwise, except sometimes for the longer face and more developed nose, one could well have imagined them to be of pure Chinese ancestry.

Into the largest and grandest of the eleven mosques, roofed with blue porcelain tiles shining in the sunlight and surrounded by fine courts and temple buildings, we sought admission.

"We Chinese," said my escort, the Follower of Virtue, "may not enter into the Moslem worship halls. Neither is it allowed for women to go inside the buildings." But the Follower of Virtue was mistaken, or possibly an exception was made in favour of one of the outside kingdom folk who, at all events, were not "swine-eating idolaters."

The day happened to be a Friday—the Moslem Sabbath—and voices in one of the side buildings were drowsing through passages of the Koran in Arabic, but the attraction of the crowd in the inner court centred round a long table littered with raw beef in gory masses, around which a number of men were hard at work slicing and chopping. Moslem priests in China derive part of their income from the slaughtering of animals, this unpleasant branch of a butcher's trade being a perquisite of the mullahs. Prices vary. One cash is charged for killing a chicken. Two hundred cash (about fivepence) for the slaughtering of an ox! The "Follower of Virtue" remained outside the inner sanctum of the "Temple of Purity and Truth," but there was no objection to stockinged feet apparently, whether Moslem

or otherwise, provided the defiling leather shoes were left on the doorstep.

In all essentials Chinese mosques follow the ordinary lines of Chinese architecture—pillared pavilions with sloping roofs and tip-tilted eaves. The "worship hall," with floors and pillars and panelled walls of wood painted in dark rich shades of colour, and empty of all furnishings and tawdry accessories save for an incense table near the entrance, possessed a dignity, an air of cleanliness and substantiality that one does not often find in Chinese temples. The floor was covered with strips of drugget, on which the worshippers gather at prayer time, taking care to keep their faces turned toward the west wall—and Mecca. The mirab, or prayer niche, occupies the centre of this west wall, facing the entrance and crowned by the Arabic inscription, "Allah the merciful and compassionate." In one corner of the sacred precincts a tiny "blind" door stands at the top, of a miniature flight of steps. This, the "Gate of Heaven," is another favourite spot for the devout. Prayer is "The Key of Paradise," but as to the five daily prayers required of all good Moslems: (1) at Adam's time (before daylight), (2) at Abraham's time (at noon), (3) at Jonah's time (at three), (4) at Jesus' time (at sunset), (5) at Mohammed's time (at 9 p.m.), those engaged in earning a livelihood excuse themselves from these regulations on the ground of pressure of business, and say that the priests will attend to these matters for them.

Altogether, the Chinese Moslem takes life more easily than his co-religionists in other lands.

"Where is the bathing place?" we asked, seeing no signs of any great marble tank in the open court like those in which the Indian Mohammedan performs his ritualistic ablutions.

So shivering a proceeding does not appeal to a Chinese. He rejoices rather in the privacy and comfort of a bath-house in which steaming water in deep tanks sunk in the ground and heated by stoves in Japanese fashion, looks pleasantly inviting on a chilly spring morning.

With regard to food, however, many who are slack in other ways are ultra-fastidious on this particular point. They cannot even defile their lips by using the word "pig," calling it by preference the "black animal," unless indeed they use it as a term of abuse when reviling their mules and horses.

On one occasion we offered to one of our muleteers, a mere boy, an innocent English bun. He looked at it a little wistfully, but declined on religious grounds, fearing evidently that pork dripping had formed part of the recipe.

Moslem women in China have not an enviable lot. Their happiness, or unhappiness, is of small moment to any one. They have no rights, no privileges, except in so far as they constitute useful chattels to their lords and masters, who guard them jealously from the eyes of others.

Women cannot enter the "Gate of Heaven"; women are not supposed to meddle with the "Key to Paradise," and if by any unlikely chance they should eventually be counted worthy of a better place than hell, there exists a little side heaven, a mere appendix to the real thing, which, according to Mahomet, is assigned for the use of

truly saintly women after death. He admitted, however, that only five—one of whom was the Virgin Mary—had ever attained thereunto; whereas, on the one occasion when he was permitted to look down into hell, he discovered that nearly all the occupants of the infernal regions were—women!

The other day (1914) the Mohammedans at a city in the province of Kansu attacked the leader of a new Moslem sect—a so-called "holy man"—who had not only committed the sin of using a Chinese translation of the Koran, but in many other ways had excited the wrath of some of his co-religionists. In a few short hours the members of the new sect were practically exterminated. The victors not only discovered a substantial sum of money in the house of the "holy man," but nine tiny cells, measuring $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, in each of which a young girl was kept under lock and key, save when required to appear in the presence of her master. There were nine of them, for Mahomet himself had nine wives, and the "holy man" had posed as being a second edition of the prophet.

Some of the most precious possessions that Si An Fu has inherited from past ages are the black tombstones, in the famous "Forest of Tablets." A rickety gate leads from a bit of dusty no man's land behind the blood-red walls of the Confucian temple into a melancholy enclosure of back yards and stable sheds and shabby pavilions. Here, for nearly 1,000 years, these monuments of antiquity have stood in black dismal rows facing the dingy tumbledown walls in these long narrow barn-like buildings.

It is a sad ending for the old-time worn tablets, which in the days of their youth, and many hundreds of years ago, stood out in the open sunlight in the grounds of the temples, doing duty as sundials. In no country but China would such valuable art treasures be so inadequately housed. From time to time through the centuries fresh steles have been added to the collection, already so extensive that over 6,000 large sheets of paper would be necessary in order to get a rubbing of each inscription.

Not only are the whole of the thirteen classics engraved in stone, but there are some fine drawings by famous artists, and amongst them the most approved portrait of Confucius, though, as the date of it is only a few hundred years back, it must to some degree be a fancy likeness.

The artist has been careful to endow the great master —the "uncrowned king"—with the square jaw, the large, heavy-featured face and superabundance of adipose tissue, which, from the Chinese point of view, signifies the "superior man," and one whom the gods have blessed, for the "superior man" is as "free from care as the chrysanthemum," and a man who is free from care must of necessity be fat!

The latest addition to the "Forest" is the tablet of the "Illustrious Religion"—the famous Nestorian monument—dragon headed, tortoise crouching, but possessing an unmistakable Maltese cross. It had lain buried for many years (from the ninth century to the seventeenth), and only a comparatively short time ago was brought into the city from the grounds of a temple

in the west suburb, and honoured by a place in the Forest of Tablets.

"*Olopun from the kingdom of Ta Tsin (Judea) on the Coral Sea, guiding himself by the azure clouds, carried with him the True Scriptures,*" so goes the inscription, and he arrived at Chang An, the present Si An, in 635 A.D.

A description is given in classical Chinese of the process of creation, the fall of man, the coming of the Christ :— "*A bright star announced the felicitous event. Persians saw its splendour and came with tribute . . . He threw open the gate of the three constant virtues, thereby bringing life to light and abolishing death. . . . His mighty work being thus completed, at noon-day He ascended to His true (place),*" and so forth. The inscription is lengthy, and a part of it is in the Syriac script. Chinese scholars have always been full of admiration of the literary style, and in 1887 the authorities in Peking were persuaded to send a donation of 100 taels in order that measures should be taken for the better preservation of the tablet. It was, also, characteristic of things Chinese, that by the time the money had reached its destination, the 100 taels had dwindled into five !

There are few outward signs of the new era in Si An Fu.

The general absence of the queue is one of the most noticeable. Crudely coloured pictures advertising pink pills or cigarettes, or some other much-sought-after foreign commodity, wayside stalls hung over with cheap and gaily-coloured foreign socks and foreign hats, numerous shops of cheap foreign oddments, from enamelled washing basins and oil-lamps to photograph

frames and looking-glasses, show that there must be an ever-increasing demand for these things.

The " Follower of Virtue " pointed me out one of the grandest of these foreign emporiums.

" What do they sell ? " I inquired, for the stock-in-trade looked more promising than usual.

" Yao shenmo yu shenmo ! " literally " want what is what ! " or in clearer language, " Whatever you want, they have ! "

So I essayed to buy some " loose tight braid " (elastic), but no ! Such a thing in Si An was " mai buh dao " (buy not arrive—or not to be bought).

Well then—a reel of white cotton.

They smilingly assented, and the larger part of the staff aided in the search. In triumph they brought back a dusty reel of black.

" I want white," I said.

" She wants white," joined in the crowd of idlers that invariably gathers round to take part in the transaction.

Surely the mere colour was of no importance ; it was all they had !

" Never mind, I will send to Shanghai for it," I said.

" Never mind. She will send to Shanghai for it," explained the crowd.

But the " Follower of Virtue " had a better suggestion to make.

" May we borrow your brightness," we said in polite Chinese phraseology, and the crowd moved aside for us to pass.

There was truly a good foreign shop, said my escort, near the South Court Gate to which he could take me, where they actually had real foreign clothes to sell, and

a foreign " leave behind sound machine " (gramophone) that was good to listen to. Surely a most up-to-date drapery store, for not only were there two life-sized waxed-faced models with *green* hair (for the dye had miscarried) of " outside kingdom folk " dressed in waterproofs and straw hats, and other " fashionable " articles of attire made in Germany, but the salesman had just received a new consignment of foreign goods from Shanghai—the Paris or Vienna of China—and seized the opportunity of the advent on the scene of a foreign customer, to inquire whether a pair of newly-arrived corsets should be worn outside the costume or inside.

Shopping in Chinese shops of the old style presents difficulties to the uninitiated barbarian. Not only does the strange habit exist of offering the rubbish first and keeping the good things till the last, but it is somewhat disconcerting to go into some respectable store to choose a purchase only to find that there is nothing to choose from. Thus in the " City of the River Orchid " we went on one occasion to the confectioners to buy confectionery for some hundreds of New Year's guests, and, behold, nothing but singularly unsuggestive brown paper parcels lined the shelves of the shop. Being, however, important clients we were quickly ushered through into the guest hall at the back, and invited to drink tea. Fortunately Ba Giao Si, in giving her orders was able from past experience to describe the particular kinds of cakes and sweetmeats desired. Otherwise to have indicated the various brown paper parcels with a request for a pound of this, and a pound of that might have led to an unfortunate sameness in the results. The silversmith in Si An,

whom the " Follower of Virtue " suggested for the purchase of enamel hair ornaments, gave even fewer outward and visible signs of his stock-in-trade. Whatever the " teacher mother " wished for could be made to order. Had they then nothing in stock ? They would look and see, and after a long delay and much hunting upstairs in the loft and downstairs in mysterious recesses, a few oddments were produced, such as silver hair-pins decorated with blue and green and yellow and purple enamelled bats and butterflies, and some silver bracelets of clumsy form. These with various alterations would at least serve for patterns. As to the price—that was uncertain—it would depend on the weight of the silver used.

One convenient custom obtains amongst silversmiths of good repute. They must stamp the name of their firm on articles of their own making, holding themselves legally bound to buy them back again, whenever required to do so, according to the weight of the silver.

To discover genuinely old curios is becoming increasingly difficult, as the curio seller is a past master in the art of imparting that look of unmistakable age so attractive in the eyes of the " outside kingdom barbarian."

A " real " antique was offered to us the other day as a great bargain. Fortunately a connoisseur happened to be at hand. " This," he said, " is a *newly-born* piece of jade and of small value."

Most of the fashionable foreign shops centre round and about an open space before the headquarters of the civil governor, and so densely packed with people and pedlars and peep-shows and paraphernalia of one kind and another, from the tables of the letter-writers and the

fortune-tellers to the stands of the barbers and the corn cutters and the tooth pullers that it seems like some old-time country fair in a modern setting. New-time policemen, half smothered in khaki overcoats and military German caps, stand on the side walk, and the shops pride themselves on their up-to-date appearance with their large glass windows, their hanging American lamps, their Western stock-in-trade made partly in Germany, partly in Japan. In one of these " European " stores my umbrella was provided with a neat and trim extra cover for the sun, but alas ! they had not understood that my desire had been for a " living cover," *i.e.*, one to take off and on. That which they had made was in their own picturesque language " dead." The Sons of Han, with characteristic contrariness, find euphemistic phrases such as " saluted the age " or " thanked the world " a convenient subterfuge in order to avoid the use of the objectionable word " dead " in its ordinary connection. They have, however, a peculiar knack of introducing it on less suitable occasions.

" What time is it ? " one inquires of a passing servant. " I do not know," comes the answer, " for the clock is dead," *i.e.*, has stopped.

Thus it is no surprise to be told that the blind alley leading out of the main thoroughfare is a " dead street " —a street without a head, and hence, it being already an unlucky spot, the outlet into the main street is used, or was used, until a very short time back, as the execution ground. That this, the still inevitable evil in a Chinese city, should occupy a part of the public highway is apparently of no consequence, for, after all, public highways, certainly in Si An, are put to many strange purposes.

Carpenters saw their wood, weavers wind their silk, curio sellers spread forth their wares, cartwrights build their carts, barbers shave their customers, men bring out a "wash face basin" and perform their ablutions, dyers and paper makers hang out their stock-in-trade to dry, wherever there is sufficient space, be the road a busy thoroughfare or a side lane, and no one seemed at all surprised to see the way blocked one morning in a somewhat narrow street by a bran new swing which an eager crowd was taking it in turns to enjoy. True, they consented to stop for a moment or two and to pull the ropes on one side to let our carts go by.

Bits of New China are breaking here and there through the crust of the Old. The telegraph, of course, is a familiar institution, and now the "lightning thread," for "lightning words" (telephone) will soon enable the Du-Du (military governor), as the "Follower of Virtue" put it, to speak words at the Yamen which will be heard in his private "gang gwan" (residence) nearly two miles away. "Are such wonders," he asks, "known in Shanghai?"

A telephone seems, after all, an incongruous item in a city, that is still amply content to go on day after day with unmade roads and undrained houses, with uncleansed streets and unminted silver, and no means of transport save that of springless carts and sedan chairs or litters slung between two mules.

SONS OF NEW CHINA, IN CLOTHES LENT BY THE PHOTOGRAPHER.

THE "NEW WOMAN" OF CHINA, DRESSED LIKE A MAN.

A DAUGHTER OF NEW CHINA, WITH TWO ARTIFICIAL DOGS, IN SUPPOSED IMITATION OF WESTERN FASHION.

CHAPTER XVII

In the Street of the Short Mile Gate

In educational matters, however, there are distinct signs of progress. Girls' schools are now the order of the day in the City of Western Peace. At certain hours, on all days except Sunday, which in Government institutions is now a holiday, a new figure may be seen in the streets walking sedately along with unbound feet, and quietly and becomingly dressed in a neat uniform of blue cotton cloth piped with white. Those who can afford the extravagance, add a cloth "costermonger" cap. These dainty young ladies are students at Government schools, and as such can pass along crowded highways with impunity. If they happen to meet a "Before Born" (teacher) they bow in the approved style bending over with stiffened arms and body as though they were made of wood, hinged at the waist. This is the new custom, but at the same time they adhere to the time-honoured rule that those who are saluting should gaze afar off, it being impolite to look each other in the face.

Among some of the ladies of fashion one or two strange practices have, as they fondly suppose, been borrowed from the foreigner.

The wife of one of the leading generals trotted past us on horseback the other day *taking off her hat* with a wide sweep to each in turn. This new fashion is gaining ground, despite the fact that in a list of sartorial rules, lately pub-

lished, women are expressly advised to retain their head covering when saluting an acquaintance.

A soft felt hat of a masculine type is much in favour, round the crown of which may be wrapped a broad white bandage if the wearer happens to be in mourning. Many, however, are still content to go without hats of any kind, and thanks to the use of bandoline (made from wood shavings), the hair looks as smooth as black satin and keeps tidy even in a boisterous wind.

One misguided lady of rank, in her eagerness to follow the fashion, took to standing at her front door smoking a cigarette and dressed in the handsomest clothes she possessed. She admitted, however, that she disliked the publicity of the proceeding, and relieved to find that, after all, this was not the foreign custom amongst well-bred women, she retired in haste to the secluded inner apartments of the contemptible ones.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when all women, of no matter how high a rank, made their own shoes, but now, in the craze for leather foot gear of foreign make, shops are to be found even in Si An where things of this kind can be purchased. Some few unbind their feet—this in Government schools is obligatory, but others merely *pretend* to have big feet and stuff the toes of the foreign shoe with paper, thrusting the tiny bound foot into the remaining space. English letters of the alphabet are a new and attractive form of ornament for the embroidered home-made shoe. A certain number of letters are put together, as often as not without any meaning, which perhaps is just as well. One unsophisticated maiden had unawares sown the letters J.O.N.E.S. on her own dainty footgear. She could not tell one letter

from the other, but admired the artistic effect. In Si An amongst some of the advanced citizens there exists a "Heavenly Foot Society"—the aim of which is to abolish the "golden lilies" (small feet) for ever and a day.

A month or so ago a petition was sent to Yuan Shi Kai asking that a fine should be imposed on any mother who still insisted on binding her daughter's feet, but whether the request was granted history does not relate.

"The tongues of women increase by all they take from their feet," goes the old Chinese saying, but then the reference no doubt was to the "uneducated woman who stares at a wall."

In Si An Fu, until the birth of the new era, and with the exception of pupils from the mission schools, women have had little chance of being anything else.

The one real improvement under the Republic, however, has been the genuine effort to promote education, but now that, too, is beginning to shrivel up like an overforced plant. One is reminded of the days of Wang An Shih, the Reformer (more than 800 years ago), when even the pupils of the village schools threw away their textbooks of rhetoric and began to study primers of history and geography, but, alas, less than ten years passed away, and all was as before. It was a case of "flowers in a mirror, of a moon in a stream."

But this time there have been many *Wangs* at work, not only one. The inoculation with Western serum has been more thorough, the results more widespread, and things will never be again as they have been. One thinks of the snail that crept up the wall five feet every day and slipped back four every night, and though the

sons and daughters of young China may not be immune from the old "disease," they will take it more lightly and in some case no doubt escape altogether.

Amongst the many new words introduced of late years into the language, one that the genius of the language seems inclined to accept, signifies an *ideal*, but, alas, many of the would-be idealists lack either the strength of will or the pluck without which, according to the psychologists, ideal aspirations are nothing worth.

In the craze for quickly acquired accomplishments, Si An Fu girls' schools make a special feature of exceedingly elaborate, very laborious and (from a Chinese point of view) highly ornamental, crochet!

Marvellous tiger head bonnets for babies are constructed with padded noses, prominent eyes, stuffed whiskers and so on, all complete, crocheted in many colours, the brighter the better. Thus a happy compromise is arrived at between things foreign and Chinese. Nothing can be more smart and fashionable in foreignised circles than some showy garment crocheted in Berlin wool, and that Baby should be adorned by a tiger's head is, as everybody knows, a sure preventive against evil influences. Whilst the children wear tiger shoes and tiger bonnets, their elders deck themselves out with crochet tippets and crochet frillings and crochet flowers —the latter pinned on as button-holes.

Although the learned Chang Chih Tung * was hardly just to foreign instructors when he complained of their "slow methods," and said that "they did not exhaust the fountain of their knowledge, but dribbled it out to

* Author of "China's Only Hope."

make it last longer," he admitted that there might be some who " were not averse to labour."

His opinion is doubtless shared by many of his countrymen, but even so, great is the desire in Si An Fu for a foreign teacher who will give instruction in the outside kingdom words, for is not a knowledge of this unintelligible language " resembling the twittering of birds " the golden key in these days to many a fat billet ?

The ancients in changing their residences did not seek for good houses but only for good neighbours, but times have changed ! The street of the " Short Mile Gate," in which my friend the teacher sister lives, is typical of democratic China—being a quaint medley of the mansions of the great and the lowly habitations of the poor. The lordly residence of one of the leading generals stands opposite a slum, but a few steps removed from a row of small eating-houses and humble shops and, of all unattractive places, one of the night haunts of the beggars. At one time a most ingenious scheme existed by which these poor street parasites were enabled to keep up a certain amount of warmth during the cold winter nights. Lying down on the ground, and forming a square, heads out, feet in, a species of tarpauline was let down on top of them, by means of pulleys, constituting a kind of counterpane shared by all.

The teacher sister's house, wedged in between the general's mansion and a small paper shop, had been until recently inhabited by a " da ren " (great man). In China there is more give and take than in our Western lands. On fine days the paper maker spreads out his new sheets to dry in the porch and on the doorstep of the foreigner's house, that being larger and more convenient

than those of his other neighbours. The slum children make garden seats of the ornamental stone work before the door, and the general's riding horses are tied up to our gates. Any complaint would be considered most unfriendly and discourteous. Amongst the Chinese no one has any compunction even in asking for the loan of a garment and a refusal would be most unheard-of. The Westerners' objection to wearing other people's clothes would only be reckoned as one of our many marks of eccentricity. In a Nanking school a pupil was reprimanded for failing to announce her need of a tooth-brush. "Then all this time you have been doing without one!" "No, indeed!" came the unexpected reply, "I shared so-and-so's."

In looking down the street of the "Short Mile Gate," over the mud holes and the mud heaps, one sees nothing of the really fine houses wedged in between the slums and the shops—nothing, that is to say, but a low wall and high gates with porches.

Pass through the gates, however, of the house that was once the "da ren's" and you will come to a series of paved courts, one behind the other, surrounded by one-storied buildings, of doors painted a bright apple green flecked with patches of shining gold like so many gilded postage stamps, and in the centre of the main court a round porcelain tank for the goldfish. A shrine in honour of the earth god stands before the gatehouse, shaded by a cluster of bamboos, symbolic of peace, and the great doors of the guest hall at the upper end of the central court are richly ornamented by carved and painted panels representing peonies (for wealth), the lotus flower (for

purity), butterflies (for happiness), and the peach (for long life).

The light filtering through the scarlet hangings before the doors and streaming through the soft paper panes of the casement windows gives a sense of subdued sunlight to those within—sunlight reflected in the shining brass on the black carved cupboards lining the walls. A painted frieze extends half across the centre of the hall between two massive wooden pillars. Who but a Chinese artist could have combined so successfully all the colours of the rainbow flung on in such broad, generous masses, and only he could have ignored all minor details with such artistic effect.

The narrow court at the back of the guest hall is reserved for the well and the now empty shrine of the well god. Beyond that again come the secluded back courts which, in the days of the " da ren," were reserved for the " skirts and ornaments " (women).

On the roof tops—significant of the fact that the " da ren " had possessed a literary degree—the " family bird," in other words the cock, carved in stone, stands out clear and sharp against the sky. The Chinese call him the bird of the five virtues. His comb (hat) shows that he is an " official," his spurs give him a right to be called a soldier. He " never flinches," hence every one allows that he is brave, his nature is sympathetic for he never omits to call the hens to share his food, and lastly, he is faithful in that he never fails to announce the dawn.

Though all houses of any pretensions in Si An own wells, they are bitter wells, and most of the water for use is

brought from the west gate of the city. Where the tangle of carts and mules and pedestrians emerge from the shadow of the tunnelled arch under the gate tower into the main street, the water carriers with their wheelbarrows and their buckets congregate, at all hours of the day, on the black slushy pavement round the famous sweet water wells.

"Unless foolish and deaf, it is difficult to be the head of a household," runs the old-time saying in China, the idea being that one must shut one's eyes to much that goes on.

There are only seven things necessary in housekeeping, so they say :—fuel, rice, oil, salt, soy, tea, and vinegar, but in the foreign household it is a case of seventy times seven, and the principal item is soap, which comes all the way from Western lands and is one of the most prized of outside kingdom produce even here in this northern city which, according to one French writer, is the "dirtiest city in the world." It is still, however, an expensive luxury and rather beyond the purse of the man in the street, and even when bought, or possibly presented as a New Year's gift by the foreign, teacher is considered too good to use except on state occasions. Fortunately for native laundry work there is a kind of bean which makes a good lather and will wash clothes. But in the foreigner's household there is, of course, soap to be had in abundance, of many varieties, and the servants sometimes put it to strange uses. A muddy pair of winter boots sent out to be cleaned are discovered, half an hour later, reposing comfortably in a lather of soap in the very pan in which the family bread had just been kneaded into shape !

Chinese servants do not find it easy at first to get into our ways, but once "in" they have the merit of never getting out of them again. In the house of a friend a new table boy was seen to be washing the plates with saliva, but drying them carefully afterwards! I forget if it was that boy or another who, on being told to wait *at* table, thought it impolite to watch the guests eating, so secreted himself *under* the table until the moment came in which to remove the plates.

The difference between the Eastern and Western point of view often leads to misunderstandings.

A servant reprimanded on one occasion for disobedience could not understand his master's wrath. "Why is it so important?" he said. "How many dollars did you lose over the matter?"

"None at all, it was not a question of money."

"Well then?"

"Thou shalt not steal—money" is a commandment well understood, but to take food from one's master's kitchen, or to gather fruit from his trees, or to borrow his things in perpetuity, or annex something, that does not mean financial loss to the owner is not, as a rule, reckoned as an actual theft.

"If you mistrust a man do not employ him; if you employ a man do not mistrust him," says Confucius, and the only way to domestic peace is to pretend sometimes to be both deaf and foolish, and ever and always to steer a happy middle course between severity and leniency.

Our house woman in the "City of the River Orchid," on hearing some one complain of the ingratitude of a fellow servant made (for a Chinese) a curiously direct statement: "That is always the way with us Chinese," she said.

" If you treat us well we treat you badly, if you treat us badly we treat you well ! " Fortunately, however, as most of us know, this is only a part of a truth, considerably outweighed by all that might be said in favour of the Chinese servant, either trained or untrained.

An undisputable household requisite in far inland provinces is the large and bulky pair of scales for the weighing of silver. The " silver shoes " weigh some fifty ounces of silver or more. The broken pieces may vary from a few cents in value to a few dollars, but though a parcel of silver is inconveniently heavy, the ten cash copper coins for daily use, which are sent back from a money shop in exchange for the silver, are almost as much trouble to carry about as a sack of coals.

It is true that there are paper notes worth from one to two shillings, but they are issued by the local Government, and may any day be reckoned as so much waste paper.

Small silver coins of 10 or 20 cents or even Mexican dollars cannot be used in Shensi. In Kiangsi, on the contrary, dollars were in favour, but not always the same kind of dollar. In one city the old " Dragon Coin " would pass ; in the next the people preferred the Eagle, and at last we arrived at a town where both the Eagle and the Dragon had been superseded by an inferior coin " made in Japan." In Nanchang, the capital, paper notes were in favour—paper notes for as small a sum as 10 cents (about 2½*d.*), which a day's journey off were practically worthless. One rule, and only one, holds good all over the land, and that is, that, whenever the money of one place is exchanged for that of another, the owner loses in the transaction.

Small wonder that the Chinese financiers are for ever postponing the much-talked-of "reform of currency." There was a time, so the histories tell us, when actually a gold coinage existed in China, and people "possessed the liberty of coining money for themselves." When one remembers the deluge of paper notes during the first years of the Republic issued by all sorts and conditions of men, one could almost imagine oneself back in those "good old days"; but in that golden age (B.C. 179) an Emperor occupied the throne of China so greatly in advance of his time that he not only introduced old age pensions for all over eighty, but added an extra luxury in the case of those over ninety in the shape of "sufficient silk for a gown." * How have the mighty fallen? It is doubtful, too, whether the octogenarians of the Middle Kingdom continued to enjoy state assistance for many years, as during the reign of their benefactor's successor we read that national finances became distinctly strained, and to relieve the situation the Emperor bethought him of an ingenious plan by which to collect funds. The white deer in the royal parks were killed, and the skins were richly embroidered and sold to the officials, who were compelled to buy them at fictitious prices, and this we imagine to be the first fancy bazaar on record.

* "Imperial History of China," Rev. J. MacGowan.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Pepper Month

Though in theory China now recognises January 1st as New Year's Day, she keeps all her celebrations for the "Go Nien" of the old calendar, which this year happens to fall on January 26th. The "Pepper Month" being the last month of the year is a busy time here as elsewhere. The chief business of the day is to get in all the money you have lent, and to pay back as little as possible of that which you have borrowed. Only here, in this land of contradictions, does one find so many people in a chronic state of being both debtors and creditors. Cooks, charwomen, gardeners, and those whom one thinks are living from "hand to mouth" have, most of them, a small sum of money lent out which may or may not ever be repaid. Yet all the time they are probably weighed down by debt.

Money or no money, everybody buys fresh mottoes in gay coloured paper for the street doors. Such sayings as "Though there are many books I have not read" (*i.e.*, though my learning is not great) "may my deeds call forth no reproach," is the laudable inscription on one of the humblest doors.

Possibly new lanterns as well as new mottoes will be purchased, and the portraits of the two famous door gods to protect the house from evil, to say nothing of the perforated paper hung above the lintel for luck.

On New Year's Eve one can hear the tap tap, chop chop sounds in all directions and the monotonous seesaw-like pounding of the "wind box" (bellows) under the stove, for rich and poor alike are preparing for the great feast of the "Three Beginnings" (the year, the month, and the day), and in Chinese cooking, meat, fish, vegetables, no matter what, must be chopped into small pieces before appearing at table.

As the last month of the year is called the "Pepper Month" (from a similarity between the character "lah"—"last" and "lah" meaning "red pepper"), so New Year congratulations rejoice in the unsuggestive title of "pepper flowers."

"To-day," wrote a Chinese woman who lived many years ago, "everybody dips the brush into the ink to write the words 'happiness, wealth and felicity.' If I might give wise advice to the ambitious it is to bear the life that is laid upon them, and not to ask for things which Providence cannot possibly accord to all."

But such philosophy would be beyond most of her countrywomen, whose horizon is still bounded by the words—"lucky and unlucky." The old superstitions are hard to shake off, and one cautious old lady who had heard something of the Christian doctrine and who, moreover, was the proud possessor of a hymn book, turned over the pages hoping to get some advice with reference to her intended house moving. She had not to search for long before she came to the words: "Sunday the best of days"—evidently this must mean the most lucky of days. Hence she gave her orders accordingly!

Some anxious souls, desirous of putting off as long as

possible the " saluting of the age " (death) stow money under the mattress on New Year's Eve which helps, so it is said, to prolong one's life. One man, of a practical turn of mind, made a bonfire of his shoes. " They have brought me nothing but ill luck," he said, " through the whole of the past years. It were foolish indeed to allow them to exert their evil influence any longer ! "

" All good things are three," say the Germans, but in China " all good things are two." In sending gifts, whether at the New Year or at any other time, one must be especially careful to send an *even* number—two, four, or if one is particularly generously inclined, six. Should the gift, however, be in return for one received, the number of articles should be the same in both cases, and as red paper wrappings are not always available, a strip of red on a brown paper package will answer all requirements, and finally they are placed on a handsome tray which, however, the bearer will bring back with a small sum of " tray money " for his personal benefit, for any one but a servant to carry parcels through the street is contrary to etiquette—which, however, is not rigorously followed in the case of books, but even a book must be wrapped in paper or a cloth ; the latter, moreover, is considered more " timien " (smarter) than paper.

A broad red sheet on which a long list of names had been inscribed was brought in the other day by the " Follower of Virtue." It turned out to be an invitation to " drink spring wine " at one of the great houses of the city.

The answer was easily achieved. It consisted merely of writing the character " djih " meaning " know "

jotted against one's name—a slightly brusque method from a Western point of view, but evidently amply sufficient.

On the day of the feast, the invitation was repeated. To omit this "second time of asking" would be a mark of incivility. Without it in fact one might almost consider the engagement cancelled.

Mr. Wang, our host, prided himself on his intimate knowledge of the queer manners and customs of "outside kingdom folk." Besides, in these republican days, it was thought distinctly smart to do things in foreign style.

They had not got to the point, however, of allowing men and women to dine together. Therefore in one of the ante-chambers came the parting of the ways, and we the "skirts and ornaments" followed our guide into one of the inner rooms of Mr. Wang's "jade-like wife"—a mother of five children, but as girlish in appearance as a maiden of eighteen, with the small eyes "limpid as water in autumn" that are considered beautiful in China, and a thin delicate nose.

The last of the five children being a girl, the mother had made a present of her to a neighbour with no more ado than we should make in offering some one a geranium cutting.

Little Mrs. Wang, being nothing if not fashionable, wore a costume, resembling in all essentials that of a man, with a long straight gown of soft blue brocade hiding her trousers, and a sleeveless jacket of rich purple. An embroidered silk cloth dangled from her waist. It had been presented to her for the tea table, but she evidently preferred to use it as a pocket handkerchief.

The reception room was a bedroom, though the stately four-post bed at one end, draped with creamy white curtains, constituted the only actual piece of bedroom furniture. In correct Chinese style we sat in stiff rows with our backs against the wall and mostly in silence. Small talk about the weather is not as useful a resource in China as in some countries. "Do you think it will rain to-day," an English girl on one occasion inquired of a stern Confucianist, but answer came there none. Thinking he had not heard, she repeated the question, at which he replied with some annoyance, "How can I know the affairs of Heaven?" Politics in these dangerous times must be studiously avoided, books and travel they know nothing about, and conversation in the inner apartments is circumscribed in the extreme. The room itself was somewhat bare and unsuggestive. Here and there pressed up against the wall stood a dwarf tree, twisted into fantastic shape and displaying a wealth of lovely shell pink blossoms. Otherwise, save for our hostess and her friends in their long masculine gowns of delicate silvery blue and violet brocade, the room was void of decoration. In the adjoining dining hall, which we entered by order of teeth (seniority) curtained beds and dwarf trees were no more, and efforts had been made to create a truly European atmosphere. The last new importation in American lamps hung from the ceiling, the long narrow table was adorned by calico tablecloths, and at regular intervals trumpery English vases of bright blue and pink glass alternated with lodging-house cruets, the "jars of the seven stars," as the Chinese call them. The vases were innocent of flowers, this trifling accessory being apparently deemed superfluous. Calico

pocket handkerchiefs represented the serviettes, and a small plate beside each guest was already occupied by several pieces of real foreign bread, excellently made, and a large hunk of sponge cake. Hot wine in pewter pots in Chinese style was poured into wine glasses in foreign style, and every guest was carefully supplied with a knife, fork and spoon, though the latter were only made of tin, a poor exchange for the elegant, ivory chopsticks of former days, and to our hostess peculiarly awkward implements to manipulate. She welcomed the dishes of sea slugs and other soft dainties which needed no cutting. "This you can bite, is it not so?" she said to me once as some of these succulent morsels were placed before us. She was not alluding of course to any dental incapacity on my part, but rather to her own relief in being able to dispense with the objectionable knife and fork. "Truly," said the guests, "you have wasted your time on our behalf," as plates heaped high with all the delicacies of the season were placed before us, and the courses followed each other in appalling numbers. "Better be rude to your guests than starve them," is the approved maxim, and even the dessert (a concession to foreign ideas in any case) was almost a meal in itself. Before each guest a plate laden with sliced pears, peeled oranges, sponge cakes, nuts, and I know not what else besides, was placed as a final *bon-bouche*.

On the whole, the entertainment did its donors much credit, for object lessons in the queer ways of outside kingdom folk must have been few and far between, yet no essential detail had been overlooked.

At the end of a dinner party it is usual for each guest to leave "golden sand" (a substantial tip) for the

servants. Mr. Wang, however, seemed aware that this was not a foreign custom, therefore, by means of the indispensable middleman, we were particularly requested to follow our own rules of etiquette.

A fashionable entertainment in these strange times aspires to be as " Western " as possible. A contrast this to the days when the Emperor in writing to Queen Victoria spoke of her people as " savages of the further seas " who were commanded to " submit humbly to the Celestial Empire " or otherwise he threatened to " pound them into mincemeat."

In the street of the " Short Mile Gate " other " Pepper Month " festivities were in progress, and the teacher sister had invited the wives of all the city members of the " Save the World " Mission to a feast. The question was how many feasts would suffice.

If in China you desire to invite thirteen or fourteen guests, you must provide for twenty-four. Should your numbers exceed twenty-four even by a solitary one, you must provide for thirty-six, and so on up the scale, the method in this madness being that *one feast* is sufficient for twelve people, but, as it is not possible to order half a feast or a quarter of a feast there is only one way out of the difficulty which is to make it two feasts or three feasts or more as the needs may suggest.

Hence for our thirty-nine to forty guests the order given to the " fan-dien " (restaurant) was for four feasts for forty-eight people. Unluckily the weather had turned wet and cold. The " hurried rain " as the Chinese call it, had changed to goose feathers (snow), keeping some of our guests away.

The master of the "fan-dien" saw his opportunity. He would send enough food for twenty-four and hope that the "stupid foreigners" would not notice the somewhat short supplies and the guests naturally would be too polite to mention the matter. He had, however, "counted without his host," and the teacher sister was too well versed in the ways of the "mai mai ren" not to perceive that the dishes or rather the basins grew smaller as the meal progressed. Diplomatically she referred the matter to the middleman. There followed the uneasy laugh peculiar to all circumstances of a similar nature in China, and all went well to the end of the meal and the appearance on the scenes of the "false vegetables." This name is given to the last course not from any discourtesy to the vegetables, but merely to signify that they are not intended to be eaten. No well-bred person will ever think of transgressing on this point, it being an understood rule that by this time everybody has had ample sufficiency. In Kiangsi, and possibly in other parts of China, a fish answers the same purpose, as the word "yu" meaning "fish," has the same sound as "yu," meaning "sufficient," though, of course, the written character is by no means the same.

Fortunately the snowflowers did not long remain upon the ground, but the weather was raw and cold, and those who came and went must have looked with envy at the glowing coal in the guest halls of the outside kingdom folk, for the only fuel that the majority could afford was a cheap mixture of mud and manure which smouldered odoriferously under the brick beds, and for the "wind stove," a few handfuls of charcoal. Coal, though only about two cash a pound at the pits in the next

province of Shensi, is 50*s.* a ton by the time it reaches Si An Fu, owing entirely to the difficulty of transport. In the olden days a certain Empress of China thought out an original plan for heating the palace apartments and had the walls of her rooms "smeared with pepper to generate warmth."

During the first days of the New Year the streets are gay with the new flower lamps, of every shape and size, in the form of birds and beasts and flowers, wonderfully and beautifully made—from long-legged cranes, popularly supposed to be the horses of the gods and symbolic moreover of longevity, to the rose-tinted butterflies significant of happiness.

On the sixth of the first moon the time-honoured custom is still observed of presenting lanterns to one's friends and nearly every passer-by is carrying a "flower lamp."

The shops on the festive days are all closed, and the dark stained wood of the doors and shutters streaked and splashed with the scarlet and orange and geranium red of the New Year scrolls.

On the night of the fifteenth, pleasure-seekers turn out to see the sights—the men mostly on foot, the ladies in covered carts carefully concealed from view. There are many novel designs—moving doves and tiny dancing figures worked by some ingenious apparatus inside the glowing balls of light, but the greatest crowd pressed round the last new toy from the outside kingdom—an acetylene gas lamp.

These are gay days for the city god, who sits on his throne in the "Temple of the City Moat" at the end of a

A CITY TEMPLE.

narrow paved lane of gaudy little shops which still remain open, for their stock-in-trade consists chiefly of the necessaries for idol worship and cheap toys for the children—writhing snakes made of wire and bamboo, paper swords and tiny monkeys concocted of mud and rag and bits of fur, which, at the instigation of a piece of thread, pop a mask over their own faces, clever toys most of them, and a farthing a piece at the outside.

In the courts around the temple the sightseers come and go amongst the pedlars and the sweet sellers, and all is bright and festive, but one step further takes us across the threshold of the god's private domain and into another world.

The air is so thick with the smoke of the candles and the smouldering incense that the image of " His Excellency " in the background is hardly visible. Much homage is offered to him in these reactionary days, and many dainty dishes are placed before his shrine, for does he not reign supreme over that other more mysterious Si An Fu in the Shadow World. What do they pray for these supplicants who kneel for a few brief moments before the altar ? With the majority, the chief object seems to be to consult the oracle, and shaking out a slip of wood from a bundle given by the priest they exchange it for a strip of paper, from which, if they are clever in these matters, they will read some prophetic utterance with reference to the future.

There are three things, all of which, so goes the saying, no *one* man can ever obtain in spite of all the prayers in the world—a son, wealth, and *whiskers !*

The great man of the city in these days is the Du-Du (military governor of the province). Now and again we

pass him squatting on the floor of his springless cart, surrounded by a mounted mob—in other words—his bodyguard. They are in uniform certainly and some of them are armed, but the shaggy ponies choose their own pace, usually a slow one, and their riders sit as they please. The Du-Du is a man of parts, say those who know, and in democratic China, it matters not a jot that he began life in the blacksmith's shop round the corner, his father's property. The family, instead of being ashamed of the connection, is on the contrary so sensible in matters of the kind, that the great man's relatives still continue to carry on the business despite the proximity of the forge to the palace. Is there any country in the world except China in which a prominent statesman will tell you without even a feeling of regret that his aunt is a charwoman, and his uncle a cook.

In the "City of the River Orchid" the younger brother of one of the influential families of the place had joined the ranks of the "Flowery Ones" (beggars). We came across him one day going round for the regular dole of cash, the monthly tax paid on the first and the fifteenth which the beggars levy on the shopkeepers, and which, the shopkeepers, most of them, are ready to pay for the sake of peace. The man's family apaprently fully acquiesced in the arrangement realising the fact that he would never be anything but a "ne'er do weel."

The Du-Du's relations, however, were no beggars, but prosperous blacksmiths, and he himself, the clever boy of the family, had been educated, well and thoroughly, first in China and later on for five years in Japan. He had proved his worth in the stormy days of the Revolution, had ascended the cloud-ladder (been promoted) and

possessed without doubt a "fragrant name" (good reputation).

The "Follower of Virtue" one day in the festive New Year season brought in word that this was the Du-Du's birthday, and if the teacher mother wished, he would escort her to see the presents that the great man had received. They were on view apparently in the open street!

Who would be a Du-Du with a birthday?

All around the doors and walls of his private residence a rowdy "Hampstead Heath" fair had established itself in honour of the festive occasion. A theatre stage had been erected high above the heads of the crowd—less pretentious peep-shows cropped up here and there, the "buyers of mirth" had congregated in force, the clamour of voices, the beating of gongs, the cries of the pedlars hawking their wares, the high shrill tones of the children must have effectually sapped all peace and quiet from the Du-Du's residence—*in honour of the day*.

Ranged along the street against the walls of his house were the birthday presents—consisting for the most part of gigantic umbrellas of red silk spread open for all men to see, and inscribed with the names of the donors in gilded characters. "The umbrellas of 10,000 people," as they are called.

Red umbrellas and the congratulations of 10,000 people to-day! And to-morrow? Who knows? A summons possibly to Peking—"Whence no footsteps return," for it is whispered abroad that the days of all Du-Du's are numbered.

CHAPTER XIX

The Contemptible One

"The Phœnixes in concord sing" is a well-known wedding air, but alas, like much else in China, words stand for the real thing, and family life is peculiarly lacking in concord.

A young Chinese friend of mine, who has studied in Japan and travelled in Europe, and lived for a time in England, considers it would be a great step in the right direction if the bridal pair were permitted to start housekeeping on their own account. "In this street," she said (a street in one of the most fashionable quarters of a large city), "there are many families with whom I am acquainted and in not one household is there any peace or happiness. The sisters-in-law, the mother-in-law, the big wives and the little wives quarrel from morning till night!"

Needless to say, our little friend and her husband were running their own *ménage* on Western lines.

No wonder the poor denizens of the inner apartments quarrelled! Their lack of education, of course, had a good deal to answer for. One recoils from the thought of those long, empty hours in the secluded courts usually consigned to the "contemptible ones." For many, the most absorbing occupation of the day is probably the hairdressing and the face powdering. The former is a lengthy business. The wealthy, of course, have their maids and

their slave girls to wait upon them, but where there are no attendants to fall back on, each one will lend a hand to her neighbour. Thus in a girls' school it is no uncommon sight to see a long row of school girls, one sitting behind the other, each with her combs and her bandoline, her flowers and her coloured braid, dressing with great care and precision her friend's glossy black tresses, while at the same time her own locks are being brushed and twisted into place. In these days either the Japanese style of *coiffure* is in favour, or the most unbecoming fashion of the Ming dynasty of nearly 300 years ago, which necessitates the cutting of two straight strands of hair to fall like black ribbons over the cheek bones.

"If one have plenty of money but no children, one cannot be reckoned rich. If one has children but no money, one cannot be considered poor"—so goes the common saying in China, and families that are well to do, increase sometimes by leaps and bounds unknown in Western lands. The other day in this city of Si An Fu each of the three wives of a certain wealthy citizen presented their lord and master with three baby daughters. It was unfortunate that every child born in the house that month should have belonged to the despised sex, but with funds at their disposal the three wives could soon make up for the disappointment and without more ado, each in turn adopted a baby boy, thereby enlarging the nursery population by six small children in as many weeks. To adopt a child, whether one has children of one's own or not, is a curiously prevalent custom in all parts of the land, and that not only amongst the rich but amongst the comparatively poor. Different plans are resorted

to by different people and "Light of the Moon," whom I came across not long ago at a Chinese-American training school, could have told a dismal story of her experiences, which doubtless are common enough if one only knew. In her native town a marriage had been arranged for her by her parents and the usual "go between," with a youth whose three wealthy uncles, being childless and getting on in years, had desired above all things male heirs to carry on the ancestral worship. They had, therefore, supplied all necessary funds for the nephew's marriage *with the stipulation* that all male offspring should belong not to the father or the mother, but to the three old men who had financed the nephew and purchased the wife.

But year after year passed on, and no "pearl of the palm" (son) was vouchsafed to "Light of the Moon." Hence, the contract was considered at an end. She was given leave to return to her father's home, but as no one wanted her there, she had drifted by a happy chance into the teacher sister's school and would before long be able to earn her own living.

By many it is not considered "respectable to drink the tea of two families," *i.e.*, to marry again, and in this land, where the majority of women are born into the world to "suffer and obey," there are many lonely souls whose husbands are either dead or have cast them off like "a fan in autumn." It is a melancholy life to sit "opposite one's own shadow," as the Chinese put it, drawing near the wood (death) knowing—oh, the bitterness of the thought—that when they get to the next world, there will be no son or grandson to worship at the grave and provide one with the necessaries not of life, but of death.

No one cares if she goes or stays, though some come to her now and again for advice, for as the Chinese say, "it is well to give heed to the voice of an old woman for sorrow has given her wisdom."

For the "contemptible one," however, whom marriage has presented with "golden joys" (sons), the day will come, provided she herself is not deficient in strength of character, when she, even she, will turn into one of the most important personages in the house.

"Man proposes, woman disposes," say some, alluding without doubt to those masterful mothers-in-law, many of whom are women of dignity of character and much intelligence. One cannot but realise what a power for good they might be in the land, given more careful training and a less superficial education in the days of their youth, for as one so often hears it said, no country rises above the level of its women.

"The woman is as earth to receive, man is as heaven to give."

"The newly-married wife should be but a shadow and echo in the house," goes the Confucian maxim, but the newly-married wife in modern days likes to have her say in most matters, and it is often no longer a case of "swallows twittering" (women chatting) but of paroquets screeching.

Now and again, but rarely, the "Phœnixes in concord sing" and the wedded pair live together like "fish in water." I remember such a case in a northern city, but, alas, it was short-lived. The husband, a professor at the university was receiving a substantial yearly income, and

was, moreover, the proud father of four charming children. His earlier life in the south, before his marriage to his dainty little northern wife with eyebrows like "the silhouettes of distant mountains" and the prettiest wine hollows (dimples) imaginable, had not been blessed by the god of wealth.

The little wife, however, was content not to inquire into details. Picture, therefore, the overwhelming grief which burst upon her like a "clap of thunder from a clear sky" when, one fine day, the senior wife (and according to Chinese law the only *real* wife) appeared on the scenes. Up till now, her very existence had been kept a secret from her successor. Wife, number one, having never possessed any children of her own, appropriated the four little ones that had been born to her rival. This, of course, was her legal right, and the secondary wife became practically a nonentity in the very house in which, up till now, all innocently and unsuspectingly, she had reigned as mistress.

On the day of our visit— I remember it well—a faint smile of joy had come back to her sad little face and in her arms she held her youngest child. It had fallen ill it seemed, and the senior wife took no interest in sick children, therefore, its own mother might have it back again and welcome!

Now and then in these modern days girls try to manage their matrimonial affairs for themselves, and without going to the length of advertising in the paper, like the advanced young lady already mentioned, a maiden of independent spirit in the "City of the River Orchid" decided to have nothing to do with the man whom her father, the "severe one," and the "go-

between," had selected for her husband. Therefore she cut off all her hair and appeared in public in masculine garb. Her wish was fulfilled, but alas, the matter did not rest there—time has gone on and no Phœnix guest (bachelor) either in the city or out of it has ever desired to have her as his " stupid thorn " (wife). Whether she finally took to vegetarianism in the hope of returning to life at her next birth in the shape of a man I do not know. She continues to live in her father's house, laughed at by all for the one escapade of her youth.

In Si An Fu there were few wealthy homes in which one wife reigned supreme. I remember a handsome guest hall in the house of an ex-official where the elegant lounge and all the chairs were upholstered in *fur*, and in which the wives clustered round the " outside kingdom guests " like a swarm of bees. Only one amongst them all could read any Chinese characters, and that one, who by the way, led most of the conversation, turned out to be, not a wife at all, but a slave girl—a bright, handsome maiden, who had, so she said, been a patient once in the " Save the World " hospital, and had there learnt to read a few words. Of the poor uneducated wives there were the " contemptible ones " of the ex-official, and the others were mostly the wives of his brothers who, in approved Chinese style, all lived under one roof.

" Several generations in a house is a mark of Heaven's favour." We called one day on the senior wife of a neighbour—a military official. She had not " invited our jade toes to benignly approach." Therefore it was possible that she might request us " not to stop the wheels of our chariot." The old serving-woman, who accompanied us, dividing the offices of chaperone and attendant, was sent

in to find out her ladyship's pleasure, and soon returned inviting us to enter. The outer courts, coolly shaded and damp and green with palms and other pot plants, would have been attractive on a hot day were it not for the presence of unsavoury oddments, more fitted for housemaids' cupboards or bathrooms, which cropped up in unexpected places. The house itself presented the usual lack of upkeep—from the peeling paint on the doors to the torn paper panes of the windows—but officials are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and who would be stupid enough to plant a willow in order that one's successor may enjoy its shade.

The "big wife" lived at the end of the court in the most honourable of all the inner apartments. She received us exceedingly graciously in her bedroom, seating herself on the bed hung with pale blue silk curtains, whilst to her guests were assigned the seats of honour at either side of the table. Table cloths of glazed calico, highly coloured and beflowered, represented the last new treasures from abroad, and cheap photographs of her relations hanging crookedly on the walls, looked strangely vulgar and out of keeping by the side of some dignified scrolls, the drawings of which were embroidered in delicate old shades of silk. Some writers praise the Chinese for their neatness. A well-dressed Chinese is probably the neatest being in the world, and in their writing, their drawing, their surgical work, and in many other ways they possess that "neat touch" which many of us sigh for in vain. Whence then comes this lack of disorder in their houses so often remarked upon? Greatly, perhaps, because they are "pickers up of unconsidered trifles" and are ever loth to throw anything away. Therefore,

as space is often limited, many unsightly objects are piled up on tables provided for other uses, or pushed into corners not out of sight but out of mind. Besides, who is to decide whether they are unsighly or not—every man to his taste, and in a well-to-do house there is usually a guest hall, tidy and symmetrical to an almost painful degree, to which the critical visitor may confine his attentions. In my lady's bedroom, however, there are many treasured oddments, which no one ever thinks of dusting, sometimes anatomical remains, which shall be nameless, and accumulations which overflowed even on to the bed. These things did not trouble her however, she sat with perfect ease ready to join in a conversation, which she, however, had no notion of starting on her own account. She was but a girl, after all, with no education save the smattering of learning which the teacher sister had helped her to acquire during the short space of time when the " Before Born " (her husband) had permitted her to attend a school, opened recently for higher class girls.

She was busy now, she said—too busy to go to school any longer, and those who understood, congratulated her on the " possession of joy," the graceful Chinese way of signifying a coming event. Besides she did " needle-thread " she added, and showed us some bits of dainty embroidery for the ends of pillows.

And then suddenly a shadow crossed her face, a look almost of terror, and she clutched the teacher sister's hands and indicated that some one had stolen up outside the window. After all, it was only the little second wife who had lately been imported into the household. We had seen her already and knew her as a pretty lively,

sharp-tongued little lady who, in her short life, had travelled much and knew the world and was, so report said, a greater favourite with the " Before Born " than the others. The little scene, though quickly over, told us quite enough of the strained state of affairs existing between the two. As we bade our farewells with the usual formulas :—" Du tsai ! " (all remain where you are)—" Please do not accompany us further," we passed the rooms of number two, who was standing as unperturbed mistress of the situation at her own door, smiling with a touch of triumph in her smile, for with her good luck, her quick wit, and her education (she could both read and write) she seemed to say that it was she, and no other, who in time would be the ruler of the household.*

Yet in spite of the unhappiness of so much of their own married life, the Chinese woman finds it difficult to understand why their English sisters should so often prefer to remain unmarried. Li Hung Chang, speaking of the massacre of the nuns in the days of terror at Tientsin, voices evidently the sentiments of his countrymen when he says :—" Our people think the putting out of the way of the nuns is a benefit to the latter as well as to the world at large, for they have no husbands and by their looks do not get much to eat."

* Since writing this, news has reached me that number two now stands alone, for the other is dead ; died, they tell me, in giving birth to her child.

CHAPTER XX

"Stooping Soldiers" *

"If man does not recognise spring, plants do," goes the saying, and though there is still a wintry touch about the winds that blow, the air in the garden courts tucked into odd corners amongst the buildings of the "Save the World" hospital, is sweet with the scent of flowers, the white petalled blossoms of the "smiling flower" (magnolia) and the feathery sprays of the white lilac. Once upon a time, the place, famous now throughout the city and for many a mile around for its good deeds and the "fragrant name" of its doctors, was the little-known palace of a mandarin.

On fine days a melodious whistle, long drawn out, passes and repasses far overhead—softer and louder and louder again. These are the pigeons with little musical instruments attached to their tails—tame pigeons which will return to their homes at night. Once again the kites have appeared, another sure sign of spring, kites of every size and shape from dragons to butterflies. Even the soldiers dawdling round the city gates cannot resist joining in this most alluring of pastimes. Great skill is shown by the experts—some of whom, of course, have had many years' practice. A Chinese author tells the story of one of these elderly kiteflyers—a paterfamilias who, having been called away on business, tied the string of his kite, an enormous specimen, larger than himself,

* Brigands.

on to his baby's cradle. What was his dismay on his return to find that a gust of wind had seized the kite which had soared out of sight, carrying with it the cradle !

But to return to our city of Si An Fu, whilst the soldiers were amusing themselves flying kites, and their friends were tying whistles to pigeons' tails, and whilst the more serious-minded were getting ready to " sweep the graves " at the " Clear Bright Festival," and the " mai mai ren " were beginning to admit that trade was good, flying words of serious import broke in upon our peace.

" White Wolf," the bandit chief who, for many months now, had been striking terror into the hearts of the people in neighbouring provinces, was marching by quick stages towards the Si An plain.

It was said that this soldier of fortune—called the " White Wolf " from a play on his name—had begun life as a corporal. He was the son of respectable farmers in the province of Honan, and whatever his military rank may have been, it was soon evident that he possessed the independence of character, the power of organisation and the gift of inspiring confidence in others which go so far towards the making of a leader of men. The story used to be noised abroad in Shensi that the bandit chief had first made his mark as military adviser to a certain luckless general, at whose untimely death he vowed vengeance against the powers that be, but, as in the early days of the Republic scullions turned into corporals and corporals into military magnates and students into Cabinet Ministers in the twinkling of an eye, so " White Wolf " may easily have been both corporal *and* adviser. One point appears certain, that for one reason or another he was soon at loggerheads with the authorities, and we hear

of him at the head of some sixty stalwart braves, escaping almost miraculously from a trap that had been laid for him. He was now a free lance and lost no time in strengthening his position. The sixty followers increased by scores and by hundreds, success brought success, and in those days of change and uncertainty, of sham Parliaments, of an unstable Government and ever-varying laws, all things were in favour of a soldier of fortune.

In the summer of 1913, we hear of him besieging cities and holding foreigners for ransom. A price was put upon his head, and during the autumn months soldiers scoured the province of Honan, pursuing him in this direction and in that. They acquitted themselves with such zeal that on our way through the province a few weeks later we learnt that he had been caught *and killed* several times over, and that on each occasion prize money had been paid over to the soldiers, who had triumphantly brought in the decapitated head for inspection.

The brigand chief, however, with the mobility that has always characterised his movements, ran little risk of being captured by the happy-go-lucky soldiers of the Honan army. His power grew till he became a terror in the land.

Since in China the "sins of a son are visited on his father," orders were given to destroy the ancestral farm and all its occupants. By the winter, "White Wolf" at the head of an extensive army, consisting chiefly of disbanded soldiers, marched on into neighbouring provinces, killing and looting.

It was New Year's Eve when he reached the city of L——, in the province of Anhwei.

In the house of the "foreign teacher" on New Year's

morning a gruff voice was heard demanding the "smoke-dragon." The smoke-dragon! Did he mean the kitchen chimney—were they, perhaps, searching for food? No; he meant the opium pipe. Here, however, he had missed his mark, there were no opium pipes in that house. He might, if he liked, look for himself and see. His followers however, had other and more sinister ends in view. "Where is the school?" they asked—"the girls' school? Are there no girls here, then?"

"None—you may see for yourselves."

But here, as everywhere their greatest desire was for money—not copper money, however, for that was far too bulky to carry far on a quick march, and "White Wolf's" men must move quickly or not at all. This was one of the unwritten laws of the bandit army and, according to reports, some who had failed to keep up with the rest had been promptly shot.

It was silver that they wanted, and experience had led them to seek it in the right quarters. A young doctor who had been trained in a foreign hospital, had set up in practice in the city not long before. In seeking to protect himself by hoisting the Red Cross flag over his door he had only succeeded in attracting the attention of the brigands. A man as well dressed as he, and making a living as a foreign-trained doctor, was certain to have money, so as he showed no signs of producing it, they shot him in the leg, wounding him badly.

His servant carried him bleeding to his friends at the Yamen, but alas! his friends, wise in their generation, had fled.

"Then take me," he said, "to the house of the 'foreign teacher,' for he will surely befriend me."

And now for the foreign teacher came one of the most dangerous moments of the day. The bandits crowded into his house in the wake of the wounded man.

" We want silver," they said.

" Give them silver," gasped the servant—his eyes blue like those in a dead sheep's head with fright. " Only give them what they want and surely my master will pay it back to you later on."

But already the foreign teacher had brought forth his little store—some twelve dollars.

" We want more than that," they said.

" Yes, give them more. Give them more ! " pleaded the servant.

" I have no more ! "

But the servant, being Chinese, did not believe this—and begged piteously that more should be produced, and the brigands smiled grimly, thinking they were in luck's way.

But as not even the skill of an outside kingdom man could create silver in an empty cash box, the twelve dollars remained twelve dollars, and even the unfortunate servant began to realise that the " Before Born " was in earnest and his words were true words.

" Then we will shoot you ! " said the brigands.

And one of them, drawing forth his dirk, pretended to stab him. " I will run my knife into you," he muttered.

" Very well," said this strange foreigner, who seemed afraid of nothing, and with a smile on his face he came a step nearer to them holding out his hand. " Very well, I am not afraid to die."

The words and the smile puzzled them.

It was they who drew back.

"Did you say," said one, "that you *can't* be killed."

"No, nothing of the kind. I said I am not afraid to die!" And the two boys and the foreign teacher's "Si mu" (wife)—they were evidently not afraid either! They faced the brigands who levelled their guns at them, as calmly and as pleasantly as though they were looking at a peep-show. Strange! thought the men, for they were unused to such stoicism. They could not understand it and felt uncomfortable in its presence. They professed indifference, however, and swaggered off dividing the money on the way.

Before evening the city was in flames. The houses of the wealthy, and those belonging to the salt and the grain merchants had one and all been ruthlessly set on fire. Streets and shops were littered with the discarded copper coins. The rich had fled, and all that the brigands cast aside, the poorest of the poor, and the beggars of the city, took for themselves.

During the day the foreign teacher had earned for himself a "fragrant name" amongst the bandits. He had, by urgent request, bound up wounds and rendered useful service to not a few.

When, therefore, that night a band of incendiaries came to his house, and suggested setting that on fire with the rest, they were promptly deterred by their leader. "Nay," he said, "that is the house of the foreign doctor and must on no account be touched."

Looters, however, came again more than once in search of treasure. A man of somewhat superior type to his companions presented a handsome jade bracelet to one of the fearless little English boys in return for a mouth-organ, and instructions how to use it. The bracelet,

however, was soon seized upon by the next bandit that passed that way. Towards the end of the second day the words "a wind is blowing" were passed rapidly from the one to the other down the crowded street. There was evidently not a moment to be lost, for the enigmatical phrase meant to the initiated that Government soldiers were in pursuit and would soon be upon them.

They were rough customers these "White Wolf" brigands, but the very ones who had made the most trouble in the foreigner's house lingered a moment to bid farewell, and gave token of the admiration they had felt for the superb courage of the two lads by dropping on one knee before them and giving the salutation that is never offered in China except to a superior.

After the bandits had gone, the city still smouldered, and the poor and the outcasts and the ne'er-do-weels crept out from their hiding places, and swept up the copper cash, and dug out treasure from the burnt ruins, and removed furniture from deserted houses, and collected stores of salt and rice and grain from charred and smoking heaps, of which a good deal was still usable.

Some of them will look back to the "White Wolf" invasion as the day of the founding of their fortunes, and many who used to be poor are now for a time, at least, almost affluent. "When a man is poor," say the Chinese, "he is wanting in enterprise." No longer should this reproach be hurled at their heads.

When "White Wolf" appeared on the border of the Si An plain, the Du-Du himself, with the few men at his disposal—some 2,000 or so—hurried forth to intercept the enemy's progress—a fool's errand, said some, but in

any case, it was hinted mysteriously that we were safer *without* the soldiers. At all the city gates, our military protectors—being Honanese, and nominally at least unmarried men—had been hastily removed and replaced by local policemen who, having their wives and families within the walls, would, it was thought, be more likely to remain loyal.

The "Wolf's" progress was apparently as easy as "hot water going through snow." At each place he came to the people fled before him. He took what he wanted and passed on.

Some of the Du-Du's men had fallen into one of his well-laid traps—and marching into a peaceful little town where there were no people about but a few harmless country folk, they suddenly discovered that the gates had closed behind them, and the country folk, increasing in numbers, turned into armed men—the "White Wolf's" followers in disguise. Some few of the soldiers "escaped by a layer of skin" and appeared at the "Save the World" hospital to be healed of their wounds. Rumour reported that the bandit army had run short of ammunition and had been cutting up telegraph wires to supply the deficiency! By this time they were not much more than twenty miles away from us—and those in charge of the guns on the city wall had seen with the "10,000-mile mirror" (telescope) the fires in the brigands' camp, up in the mountains to the south, and reported their numbers to be legion.

In case of attack no one could pretend to say if Si An Fu would remain firm or not "White Wolf" had friends within the city walls, and bandit armies in China take cities by strategy rather than by force.

REPUBLICAN SOLDIERS.

Those, the very poor, who "ate empty handed rice" had heard of others of their ilk who had made a competence for life by merely taking possession of the things that the robbers had left behind. "White Wolf's" programme was "down with the rich at any cost." It was those who "wore good garments and ate good food" (were well off) who suffered most, and in some cases suffered not unjustly, for only the poor could know how often they themselves had "eaten bitterness" at the hands of their richer neighbours—those wealthy arrogant ones, who had an inconvenient way of buying things without paying the full value, of storing up grain so as to raise the price, and of treating righteous complaints as unwarrantable insults.

It was said that the soldiers with a keen eye to the main chance were beginning to think favourably of "White Wolf." Words were noised abroad that all prisoners of war in the bandits' camp were financed and promoted, whereas the unlucky few who had fallen into the hands of the Government troops had been brought into the city and shot dead without a word.

The authorities in Si An Fu fearing trouble within the gates, issued peremptory orders prohibiting certain subjects of conversation. "Do not discuss politics," used to be a common notice on the walls of Peking tea shops, and now the same rule was again enforced, and every one had forgotten the "People's Kingdom" and the proud motto of "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality."

"They are only ten miles away!" said the "Follower of Virtue" one evening, rushing in upon us with the disturbing news.

A few minutes later a terrific report rent the air, as

though all the cannon on the city wall had started firing.

But it was not the cannon after all—only a bomb that had been jerked out of a soldier's belt as he was riding down the street on one of the jolting carts. In exploding, it had shattered four men to pieces and brought down an archway, causing a temporary panic amongst the people, who had mistaken the hubbub for brigands. Before morning it seemed more than possible that "White Wolf" and his men would be outside the city gates—but we had reckoned without the weather. An hour later the rain, heavy thunder rain, was falling in a deluge; by the next morning it had turned to sleet and by the next to snow. The unmade roads of Shensi sink out of sight altogether in a long spell of wet, and it was hardly possible, and certainly not probable, that either the Government troops or the bandits would march in any direction whatsoever. As, however, local conditions of weather could hardly be known in Peking, the opportunity seemed an excellent one in which to report a grand victory on the part of the Government forces. Possibly there was a grain of truth at the back of it, for Si An Fu was left severely alone, and the brigand army went on its blissful course of destruction, looting the cities on the plain.

On the way back to Honan a few days later the carts of merchandise, which had blocked the way so often on our journey up, had vanished one and all—carts, animals, coolies had gone into hiding, or had been commandeered by the transport corps of the northern army, which was "oozing" along in pursuit of "White Wolf," and which some day, possibly, meant to take up the matter in real earnest. For the present there seemed no particular

hurry. Besides, how could any one with heavy baggage, carts and gun carriages, hasten over these impossible roads. More than once we met long lines of them bogged deep in mud. There was, moreover, an air of permanency about the situation which seemed to suggest want of interest on the part of the carters, or lack of initiation on that of their new masters.

On one occasion our carts were ordered summarily to stand on one side to await the approach of the general in command. A mounted bodyguard clattered past, and we looked with interest to see the "da ren" (great man) ride by in state, but we looked in vain, for the general was squatting humbly on the floor of his covered cart, a huddled figure hardly visible in the dark background.

The countryside had changed its winter robe of dusty coloured loess into one that was striped and flecked with green—the green of the spring wheat which lined the terraced cliffs, and spread itself out in broad patches on every level tract of land. Diving down into a well-watered valley for a mile or so in the province of Honan, we found ourselves in a garden of peach trees out in all their glory. The pink blossoms hung like rose-tinted clouds at the foot of the blue misty mountains, and after a while the road itself became a rippling stream, babbling down hill amongst the rocks!

China in these days, ignoring her beloved doctrine of the happy middle course, leaps from one extreme to the other, and side by side with her mediæval roads and antiquated means of transport, behold the last new thing in military aeroplanes—made of bamboo and aluminium, fitted with bombs and French aviators and also in pursuit of "White Wolf."

The country people gathered round to look at these new inventions of the outside kingdom folk, but their stolid faces expressed no surprise.

An aeroplane was just a new kind of "gwei" (demon) and could fly, but what was more natural? All demons could fly, and the scholars would no doubt have reminded one of the fact that such things as flying cars were known to the men of the Middle Kingdom many hundreds of years ago.*

It was fortunate that our military escort, provided for our protection by the officials, did not form part of the regular army.

At each Hsien city the men were changed for the worse. The first lot had uniforms and swords, but some of the swords were broken; the next had rifles but no ammunition; and on the last day of all, our guards possessed neither swords, nor rifles, nor uniforms, but ragged clothes and bare feet and were doubtless beggars acting as substitutes.

Three months have passed since the northern armies travelled over the Si An road in pursuit of "White Wolf." Patiently they have followed in his wake gleaning the fields that he has reaped through the province of Shensi to that of Kansu and back again to Shensi. Loot was plentiful and the job proved lucrative. It was a thousand pities to bring it to a close too soon, so the northern soldiers, appreciating their good fortune, kept the hunted "Wolf" at a discreet distance. And now the brigand chief, they say, has returned for a while to his old haunts in Honan, and the northern armies, resting

* "Rough wood-cuts of flying cars have been handed down for many centuries." "The Civilisation of China," H. A. Giles.

after their labours, might not inappropriately sing the song of the three jolly huntsmen :—

> "So they hunted and they hollo'd till the setting of the sun,
> An' they'd nought to bring away at last when the huntin' day was done.
> Look ye there.
>
> "Then one unto the other said, 'This huntin' doesn't pay,
> But we've powler't up and down a bit an' had a rattlin' day,
> Look ye there."

There was doubtless some connection between "White Wolf" and the revolutionary party. But when the European War broke out in August, 1914, and foreign moneys were difficult to obtain, the rumours of a fresh revolution, planned forth at month in China, died down with surprising rapidity, and with dramatic suddenness the great bandit chief was declared to be dead. That his death was attributed to three different causes aroused the suspicions of the incredulous, and although in the end the people of Kai Fong Fu had the satisfaction of seeing a mutilated head with the inscription "White Wolf" hung upon the city wall, there are still many in that same province of Honan who continue to believe in his existence.

CHAPTER XXI

A Painted Cake *

In the war waged against idolatry during the first year of the "People's Kingdom," even the grand old Confucian temple at Nanking did not escape. There were no idols there to shatter and to burn, but the soldiers seized on all the idolatrous accessories of Confucian worship—the wooden axes, the imitation musical instruments, the red-fringed official hats and so forth, and battered them to pieces. Though the tablet of the "Great Master" above the altar still remained intact the floor of his temple was littered with broken trophies. They would never be required again; never again would any member of a "People's Kingdom" be called upon to "ko teo" even to the "Perfect Sage."

In the "City of the River Orchid" during the second year of the Republic an empty Confucian temple was considered great waste of house room, and a company of soldiers, bed and baggage, were installed in the once sacred precincts. But the third year of the "People's Kingdom" beheld a sudden reversion to the old order of things. At the "Spring Festival" at Si An Fu, and indeed, all over the country, the old time celebrations were carried out in detail by order of the President. No less than fifty-seven animals—oxen, sheep and pigs—were slaughtered that day in the city in honour of the "Uncrowned King." The officials assembling before his

* A thing that has come to nothing.

altar " ko teoéd " in the old-fashioned style, and " the Perfect Sage, in virtue equal to Heaven and Earth," was requested once again to enjoy the offerings presented to him.

The ceremony had taken place early in the morning, and when, with the " Follower of Virtue " in attendance, I presented myself at the gates under the dusty cypress trees, it was only to find that all was over. Before the honoured tablet, however, the " Philosopher's King's " own share of the feast—a dead ox of substantial dimensions—still lay undisturbed. Butchers, cutting up the other slaughtered animals, were hard at work, and the dead pig, the especial property of Confucius's disciples, was slung on a bamboo pole to be carried forth and divided with the rest. Bowls of grain had formed part of the offering, and finally all would be shared out amongst the leading men of the city.

" We will send the teacher mother a piece of the Confucian cow," suggested an attendant, receiving, however, the hasty assurance that she truly could not venture to accept so magnificent an offer.

Though to many the Republic has become a " painted cake," some at least of the seeds scattered here and there in the days of its first youth have taken root. Hence comes it that amongst men of wealth and men of influence quite a few are not only willing, but eager, that their sons should acquire some knowledge of Western learning and, moreover, adopt the Western religion. It is too late and altogether not convenient (" puh bien dang ") they say, for them to become Christians themselves, but for the rising generation the matter is entirely different. How

about the ancestral worship, one inquires—the prayers and sacrifices to the spirits of the forefathers required of all dutiful sons ? They have faced that question, too, and naively make answer that the enforced worship of ancestors ill accords with the spirit of liberty and equality of a true republic. " Man man tih " (by degrees) these idolatrous ceremonies will all be abolished. " Man man tih " democratic China will show the world what a " People's Kingdom " should be like ! How this triumph is to be achieved nobody knows, but " the sage accomplishes great things without undertaking them," said the wise men of old, and " the tree of ample branches grew from a tender shoot, and the castles of nine stories began with a heap of dust! "

The reactionary change in the educational programme, as illustrated by the management of the last Civil Service examination, was certainly a little disconcerting to the candidates. For three years they had been working hard at Western subjects in accordance with the rules laid down. Picture then their dismay when, in the third year of the " People's Kingdom," the examiners left Western subjects severely alone, and confined their attention to the old classics—the very books which, in the mad craze for modern learning, had been relegated to back shelves.

" A man who has a knowledge of foreign ways and is ignorant of Chinese," said the famous statesman Chang Chih Tung, " has become a brute." Possibly this opinion is still shared by some of Chang's successors, who would also point out the fact, that in many cases modern education and revolutionary ideas have stalked through the

land hand in hand. Men who should have known better have "affected illumination for the confusing of old-established regulations."

Ultimate success in the examinations depended greatly on the answer to the one important question: "Did you fill any official post under the Ching dynasty?" All who replied in the negative were promptly ploughed. Great was the bitterness, many were the protests, so much so, that the authorities took fright and hastily invited the disappointed candidates to enter the lists a second time. Those whose papers passed muster were thereupon appointed to more or less nominal posts in the various provinces.

That the people should in future understand what is expected of their sons, the Ministry of Education published a list of seven subjects on which students of elementary schools would be periodically examined. They were to be taught to love their own country, to respect militarism, to exalt truth, to follow the precepts of Confucius and Mencius, to encourage self-restraint, to beware of greed and contention, *and* (in this one detects a touch of probably unconscious sarcasm) they were especially to beware of making too rapid progress!

These seven principles were "the objects to be attained in education." It would be interesting to know on what lines the final examinations were conducted.

Amongst the country people educational reforms, though approved in theory, were difficult to put into practice.

In an east coast province orders came from Peking that a census should be taken of the children in certain

outlying districts with a view to the establishment of schools. The laudable efforts of the gentry, however, who undertook to make the necessary inquiries were woefully misunderstood. The names and ages of the boys and girls could be needed for one purpose only, and far and near the rumour got about that in order to finish laying the foundations of the new "iron road" (railway) bridge over the great river a large number of children's souls were indispensable. So and so's son had already fallen ill and died as a result of the investigations, and there was no telling who would be the next. The people, frightened and indignant, mobbed the house of the leading magnate of the neighbourhood threatening vengeance.

Soon the whole countryside would have risen in revolt had not the book in which the children's names were inscribed been hastily handed over to the irate parents, and a promise given that no further inquiries should be made. Small wonder that altruism finds little favour in China!

Meanwhile the President, Yuan Shi Kai, lived as a self-made prisoner in the "forbidden city" appearing but seldom, and then mostly in an armoured motor car. He abolished provincial assemblies and Peking Parliaments and military governors, and appointed a select band of seventy counsellors who wisely followed a piece of advice given in the reign of Tao Kuang and by "avoiding any reference to vexed questions, were non-committal, invariably humble and plausibly evasive, never criticising adversely and never condemning." The polite President expressed a hope that the seventy counsellors "would become illustrious, and that through them, the welfare

and the misfortune of the people would be made quite clear."

As to the provinces, a military general and a civil magistrate would divide the honours between them and "produce concord by speaking salutary words to the heads of families."

In places where the President had reason to suspect active opposition a military despot with a force at his command was appointed to look into things.

One of these autocrats "confused great matters with small," and never ventured thereafter to go beyond the gates of his Yamen. On one eventful New Year's Day he forbade the use of fire crackers, but the populace, accustomed to proclamations which might or might not be taken seriously, made up their minds that so innocent an amusement as the firing of a few crackers could not possibly do any one any harm. They had reckoned without the soldiers who, patrolling every quarter of the city, dragged forth the offenders, old and young, rich and poor, into the street and forcing them down on to their knees inflicted a hundred blows on all who could not or would not purchase their escape. Alas, for the vain boast of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity."

Still there are many who tell you proudly that "China is now a Republic" and talk of the great future of their country, and some of them stand waiting for the plums to fall. Meanwhile energetic little Japan does *not* wait but gathers a few in advance from the branches of the tree.

The influence of Japan is far reaching.

We read in old records of the sixteenth century "that the 'barbarians from the islands' (the Japanese) invaded the Inner Land (China) and distressed the villages, on

which account the public manners underwent a change ; the townspeople became light and vain ; fellows who had not a bushel of corn at home would wear elegant clothes and beautiful shoes abroad." At the beginning of the twentieth century, the " barbarians from the islands " play a different game. They invade the ports and the big cities, selling goods to ready buyers, teaching schools, absorbing trade, and starting industries, thus seeking to make themselves more or less indispensable to their fellow Orientals. One curious fact remains, significant of much, that, in spite of the despoiling of the rich, the pillaging of cities, the looting of villages, the devastation of wide tracts of country and the borrowed millions of foreign money that has been practically poured into a sieve and wasted—in spite of all this ruin and distress, China is still very nearly as rich as ever she was, but has grown even more adept than of old in the art of hiding her light under a bushel. Some who have lost their all are by no means " living in decay," but have still money enough and to spare, for the Chinese are far too clever to put all their eggs into one basket. A little of the hoarded wealth has been borrowed lately, borrowed in perpetuity by the powers that be, to swell the so-called " internal loan." To refuse to lend would have been too costly a proceeding. " We must devise means to meet our obligations," so ran the message from Peking, " for as long as the European War lasts ambitious persons will watch for an opportunity to grasp the power of directing our financial administration, thereby sucking dry our fat and marrow, and for ever depriving us as a nation of any hope to recover our wonted greatness."

There are not many, however, who think such a

disaster possible. The coat of arms semi-officially proposed in the early days of the Republic still reflects the aspirations of some of the enthusiasts. In the first place grain was selected, to which the sun, moon, and stars were added to signify light, a mountain to denote command; a dragon, mutability; a pheasant, culture; sacrificial cups, filial piety; aquatic grass, purity; flames, brightness; grains of rice, nurture; a hatchet, decision, and finally a zig-zag symbol was intended to represent discernment.

But though these dreams of the would-be reformers were as "upper floors in the middle of emptiness" one thing was certain, that a newborn patriotism was struggling for life,* and a new spirit of independence was rapidly gaining strength.

Young China had caught a glimpse of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Once roused, there was little she could not do if she set her mind to it. Witness the marvellous results of the opium crusade, conducted under especially difficult circumstances.

The great Yuan Shi Kai himself assured the world in 1916 that the Republic had not been a failure and was absolutely certain to continue. "The monarchical government is as dead in China as in the United States," he said. Yet even in the light of these words no one was in the very least surprised to hear that the President of

* In 1919, as a protest against the handing over of Tsingtau to Japan by the Allied Powers, the students of China organised one of the most remarkable strikes of modern days; universities and schools were closed, shops were shut, and banks ceased to do business. As one result of this stand brought about by the scholars of the country, certain corrupt officials in Peking, who had been playing into the hands of Japan, were dismissed from office, and many are now of opinion that the Shantung question will eventually be solved in favour of the rightful owner of the soil.

the Republic intended himself to become the founder of a new dynasty.

In the East as in the West there is "many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip." The "strong man of China," as the English journalists used to call him, spoke in honeyed tones of the future of the Republic and set himself at the same time to make preparations for his own coronation.

In some Chinese temples there hangs an abacus on the wall beneath which these words are inscribed—

> "Many times man reckons up accounts,
> But Heaven reckons once and once for all."

As ever, it was the unexpected that happened. With the dramatic suddenness that so often marks the death of a great man in China, Yuan Shi Kai was called upon to hand in his last reckoning.

China—a house divided against itself, with many leaders and no ruler—stands in some ways where she has stood before with one supreme difference: that she no longer considers the "Middle Kingdom" the centre of all culture, and the only part of the universe that matters, but has widened her outlook and dreams dreams and sees visions and cherishes ideals which some day no doubt will help to make her people one of the greatest nations of the world.

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